

## EVIDENCE OF LATE NEOLITHIC CREMATION AT TEPE SIALK, IRAN

BY

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**Abstract:** During recent archaeological excavations at the northern mound of Tepe Sialk, a small cluster of burials was found in a settlement layer dated to the latest phase of the Late Neolithic period. Among the six burials recovered, four were jar burials including cremains, one was a plain pit grave with no traces of cremation and one was a double burial with both cremated and uncremated bones. The white colour of the cremains indicated that, except for one cremated body, all were burnt at temperatures exceeding 700/800°C and most were covered by red ochre. In two cases, the spatial distribution of bone fragments belonging to various body parts revealed that the bones may have been systematically collected from the funeral pyre and placed into funerary vessels.

**Keywords:** human osteology; cremation; bone preservation pattern; red ochre; funeral archaeology; Neolithic; Tepe Sialk; Central Plateau

### Introduction

The Neolithic period in the north Central Plateau of Iran began ca. 6000 BC. The local population most probably lived in permanent villages with mixed economies comprised of plant cultivation, animal husbandry and some exploitation of wild resources (Young & Fazeli 2008, Fazeli et al. 2009, Pollard et al. 2012). Tepe Sialk, located in the southern part of the city of Kashan, was an important Neolithic site in central Iran. It consists of two mounds spaced c. 600 metres from each other. The north mound was inhabited chiefly during the Neolithic and earlier phases of the Transitional Chalcolithic. It was first excavated between 1933 and 1936 by a French archaeological team directed by Roman Ghirshman (Ghirshman 1938) and then in the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century the *Sialk Reconsideration Project* was led by Sadegh Malek Shahmirzadi from the Iranian Centre for Archaeological Research (Malek 2002, 2006).

In 2008 and 2009 the site of Tepe Sialk was re-excavated by an archaeological team directed by Hassan Fazeli Nashli to establish a more precise chronology. The original Ghirshman's excavation area TRII was chosen as a base for the placement of a new stratigraphic 2.5x2 m trench. Cultural layers extending 16.30 metres in depth were recorded and a series of radiocarbon dates revealed that Tepe Sialk North was founded sometime after 6000 BC, and finally abandoned in the very beginning of the 5th millennium BC (Fazeli et al. 2013). Four phases were recorded in trenches V and VI and small portions of several houses were observed in this narrow space.

Roman Ghirshman (1938) reported several Neolithic burials at Tepe Sialk and noted, with caution, some evidence of human cremation. He also mentioned that most of the graves from period I contained no grave goods. During the 2008 and 2009 excavations at Tepe Sialk six uncremated human burials were found in the Neolithic and Transitional Chalcolithic contexts (Sołtysiak & Fazeli 2010), although in most cases the narrow parameters of the excavation trench obscured recognition of their direct archaeological context. However, it may be safely assumed that all these burials were located in domestic spaces inside houses. Some skeletons were covered with red ochre and laid down in the flexed position. The most intriguing discovery of the 2009 spring excavation season was the clear evidence of cremation inside one room, close to the wall (context 5098), at a depth of c. 6.05 meters in trench V. This context was dated to Sialk I.4 (i.e., Late Neolithic II, 5894-5725 cal. BC). A cluster of six burials including three jar burials along the eastern wall, a plain pit grave to the west (context 5103) and two other jar burials close to the section were recorded (fig. 1).

## Material and methods

The sample included one double burial with both cremated and uncremated human bones (C5113), four cremated individuals (C5091, C5102, C5110, C5112) and one articulated infant skeleton (C5103). Cremains in the vessels were divided into two (C5102 & C5110) or four (C5112) arbitrary sectors (denoted by Arabic numerals) and each sector was explored in two mechanical levels (Roman numerals). Differences in distribution of elements from various parts of the body between sectors and levels may be used to address the question of whether cremains were collected from the pyre in a random or systematic way. In the case of vessel C5113, the upper

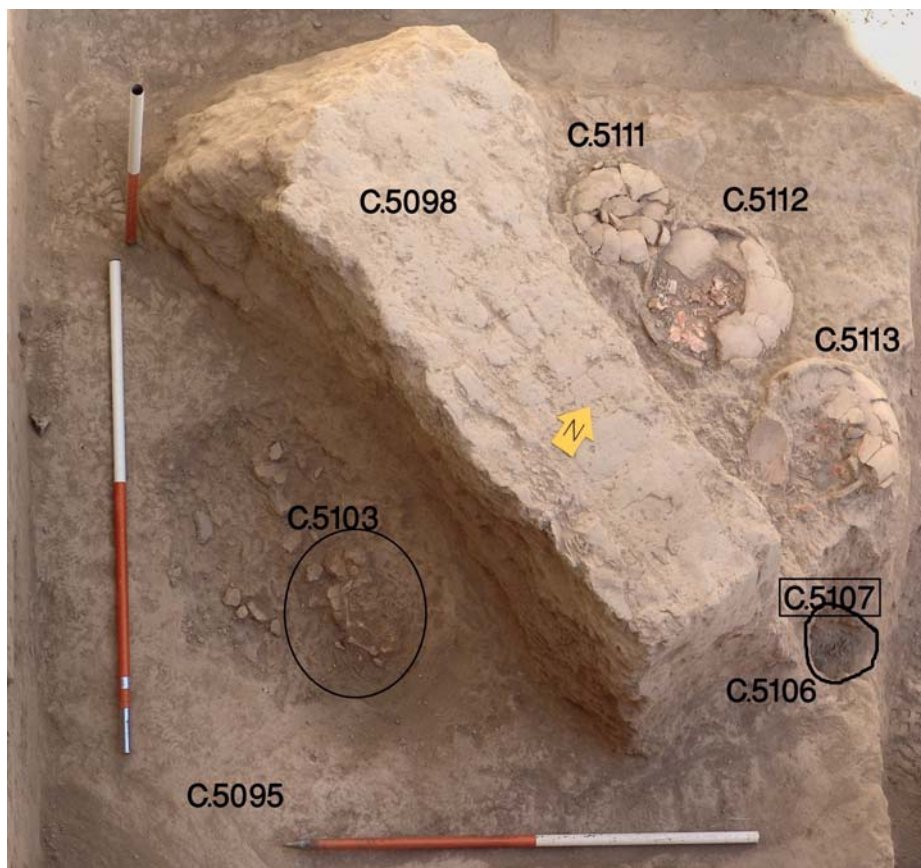


Fig. 1. Cluster of graves found close to the wall C5098.

level of the cremains was explored as a whole and only the lower level could have been divided into two sectors.

All recognised bone fragments were briefly described in the following way: 1) bone unit; 2) fragmentation; 3) side; 4) colour (if other than dominant one); 5) sex and age determination (if applicable); 6) pathologies, nonmetric traits and metric measurements (if applicable). The weight of the cremains was recorded for one vessel (C5112) where it was possible to separate and clean the soil filling the container from the bones. Measurements were taken according to the *Standards of data collection from human skeletal remains* (Buikstra & Ubelaker 1994). All metric measurements were taken using spreading callipers with accuracy to 0.5 mm, although

they must be treated as uncertain due to the risk of unpredictable shrinkage during cremation (cf. McKinley 2000: 413). Differences in the calculated frequencies of bones representing various body parts were tested using a  $\chi^2$  test with Correspondence Analysis.

## Results

**C5091.** Vessel C5091 contained the cremains of an infant covered by a large amount of red ochre. Many small recognisable fragments were observed but not described in detail. All parts of the skeleton were represented with the vertebrae being relatively better preserved (some halves of neural arches were complete). No clear distribution pattern occurred in this vessel. Among the bones, there were six complete deciduous molar germs which enabled assessment of dental age as 6 months ( $rm^1$  and  $lm^2$  not found, germ development stage 5/6 in other first and 4 in second molars, scale after Moorees et al. 1963). Colour of cremains was hidden by red ochre, but two fresh fractures revealed white bone.

**C5102.** This vessel contained the cremains of an adolescent individual, with some epiphyses still not fused to the metaphyses. No traces of red ochre were observed here and some bone fragments were joined together by hard clay. The cremains of this individual were white, sometimes light grey, and occasionally black (some arm and forearm fragments) or brown (ribs, some metacarpals and finger segments). Frequencies of bone fragments from various skeletal units retrieved from the arbitrary sector and level units of the vessel are presented in the Table 1 (some surpluses are highlighted with light gray). There is no clear pattern and it is likely that bones from all body units were collected in a random way or completely mixed in the vessel (for two levels and 14 skeletal units  $\chi^2=19.44$ ,  $p=0.11$ ). The absence of any recognizable pattern or order may also be observed in the Correspondence Analysis biplot (fig. 2).

The individual C5102 died at approximately 15 years of age, which was indicated by the lack of fusion of the femoral and humeral heads, proximal epiphyses of finger segments as well as in the iliac crest and ischial tuberosity. Initial fusion was observed at both ends of the radius and on the distal ends of the metatarsals. The crown of  $LM^3$  was complete, but no root formation was observed. However, the apex of the right mandibular second



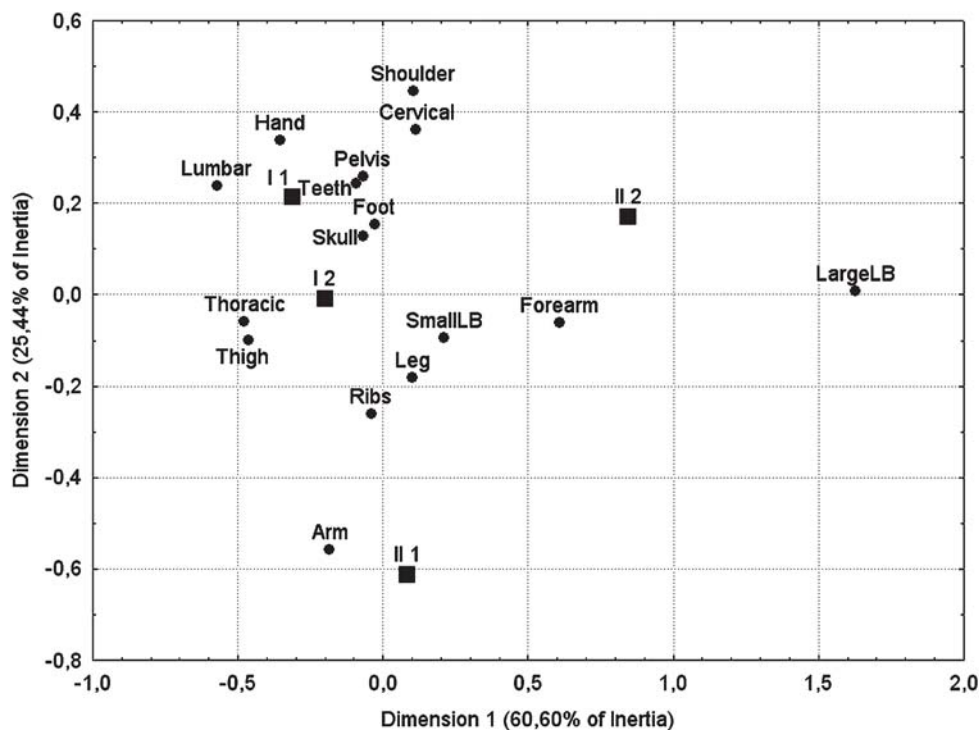


Fig. 2. Correspondence Analysis biplot for spatial distribution of bone units in C5102.

molar was already closed. The glabella was gracile and the right supraorbital margin was sharp, but the individual was too young for reliable sex determination. No hypoplasias were present on the third molar and the only observed pathological condition was possible initial osteochondrosis of the right condylar process of the mandible (see fig. 3).

**C5103.** The skeleton of this newborn child was buried in a pit grave, south of the cluster of vessels containing cremains. The body was laid on its right side with the legs flexed and covered by soil containing some sherds and at least one animal bone. The cranium was represented by several small fragments of the parietal and occipital bones, including both the occipital wings and base, together with a broken left temporal bone. The left greater sphenoid wing, left zygomatic bone, broken left mandible and a small fragment of maxilla were also present. The spine was almost complete and



Fig. 3. Possible osteoarthrosis in mandibular condyle of the individual C5102.

only one cervical, one lumbar and three sacral vertebrae were missing. Many rib fragments, both broken scapulae and clavicles, two sternal segments, the complete three right bones of the pelvis and a fragment of ilium from the left side were also preserved. Limb diaphyses were represented by both humeri; the right radius broken at the distal metaphysis; the proximal half of the left ulna, the right femur; the proximal part of left femur; and a small piece of proximal metaphysis of right tibia. Other diaphyses and most hand and foot bones were missing; only four metatarsals or metacarpals and two finger or toe segments were retrieved.

**C5110.** This vessel contained the remains of an adult individual. In this case most remains were black, but occasionally white (especially on external surface of a femoral shaft). Traces of red ochre were observed only in a few fragments of bones. The frequencies of bone fragments from

various skeletal units retrieved from the arbitrary sectors and levels of the vessel are presented in the Table 1 (some surpluses highlighted with light gray). In this case the pattern is unclear, but some surplus vertebrae and ribs occurred in the lower level and in one sector of the upper level skull and pelvis fragments were found much more frequently than in other sectors (differences are statistically significant: for two levels and 14 skeletal units  $\chi^2=56.32$ ,  $p=0.000$ ). This tendency may be observed in the Correspondence Analysis biplot (fig. 4) and it is likely that the trunk remains were collected and deposited in the vessel first, and fragments of skull, pelvis and femur were collected last. One uncremated animal bone was also present at the bottom of the vessel.

The bones were more robust than in other individuals, but reliable sex assessment was not possible based on observation of the traits available for sex estimation (glabella 4, mental eminence relatively gracile, pubic

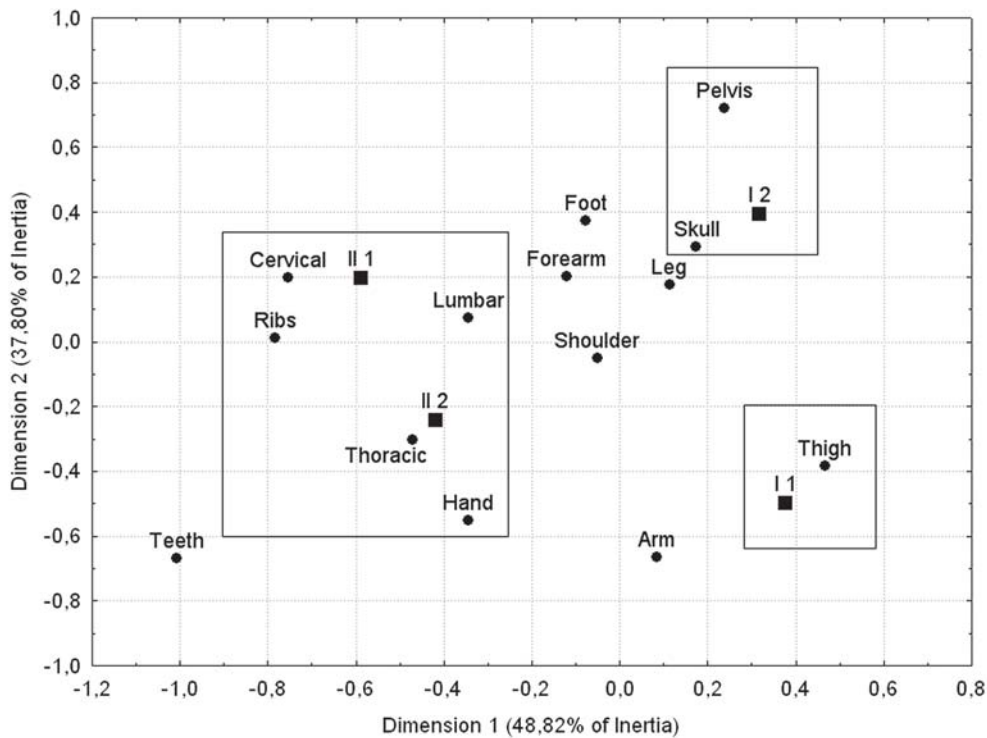


Fig. 4. Correspondence Analysis biplot for spatial distribution of bone units in C5112.

symphysis strongly eroded, but likely without ventral arc). Age determination was possible based on the pubic symphysis and auricular surface. Some obliterated remains of ridges and furrows were observed in the upper part of the symphysis and the margins were not fully developed (stage 4/5\* after Todd 1921), very clear striae with no granulation occurred on the auricular surface (stage 2\* after Meindl & Lovejoy 1989); both features point to 25–30 years as the most likely age at death.

No degenerative joint disease was observed in this individual. Two cervical, two thoracic and one lumbar body were complete enough to score spondylosis together with 12 cervical, 13 thoracic and 6 lumbar intervertebral articular surfaces complete enough to score osteoarthritis. Two pits on the thoracic transverse process; three rib tubercles; 4 proximal and 3 distal ends of finger segments; one distal end of a toe segment; one distal end of metacarpal; a right glenoid cavity; a right patella; one femoral head; one femoral and one tibial condylar articular surface; and a left occipital condyle were also present.

**C5112.** This vessel contained the cremated bones of an adult individual. The cremains were white and mixed with an average amount of red ochre. Vertebral bodies were relatively well preserved and often complete. Content of the vessel measuring ~34cm in diameter was divided into four sectors and two levels, but all skeletal units seemed to be completely mixed together (see Table 2; for two levels and 14 skeletal units  $\chi^2=11.82$ ,  $p=0.54$ ). Compared to the contents of other vessels, bone fragments were relatively clean and only a few large clay particles were present, so it was possible to weight the cremains. The total weight was 2435.5g, which is close to the assumed maximum range for a single adult individual (McKinley 2000:408). Although no overlapping fragments were observed, it is possible (but not very likely) that the vessel contained the cremains of more than one individual.

Several bone fragments enabled tentative sex and age-at-death determination. Both the ischiopubic ramus ridge and subpubic concavity on the left side had a male shape (Phenice 1969). Also the greater sciatic notch was relatively narrow, although this may have been due to postmortem deformation. The nuchal crest, glabella (4+) and right supra-orbital margin (5) were robust (Acsadi & Nemeskeri 1970). A large fragment of the right pubic symphysis had well developed margins, no ridges and furrows, dense bone covered the whole area with some small remnants of granulation

(stage 8; Todd 1921). However, cranial sutures were only slightly obliterated (midlamboid 1, sagittal 0 or 1; Meindl & Lovejoy 1985). In general, the individual C5112 was probably a mature male.

The individual C5112 suffered from degenerative joint disease. Initial or advanced spondylosis was widespread in the cervical (3 per 4 vertebrae) and lumbar spine (4 per 4 vertebrae, fig. 5). The initial stage was also observed in the three lower thoracic vertebrae (3/12 in total). At least one cervical and two lumbar bodies were compressed on the ventral side. However, no osteoarthritis was scored at the intervertebral articular surfaces (5 cervical, 16 thoracic and 5 lumbar preserved) nor in pits on the thoracic transverse processes (4 preserved). Of the synovial joints preserved well enough for scoring, osteoarthritis was present on the proximal right ulna and a fragment of the distal femur. No degenerative joint disease occurred on the glenoid cavities; proximal and distal left humerus; proximal left ulna; proximal radius; both proximal femora; three other distal femur fragments; both proximal tibiae; the proximal right fibula; two proximal metatarsals; one distal metacarpal; one distal finger segment; one proximal and two distal toe segments; or a talus and calcaneus. The atlas and axis were also unaffected.



Fig. 5. Spondylosis in lumbar vertebra of the individual C5112.

**C5113.** This vessel contained the cremains of an adult with several unburned infant bones on the top. The subadult skeleton was very incomplete and represented by both broken femoral and tibiae diaphyses; fibulae fragments; the middle and distal portions of the left humerus; the proximal left radius; an ulna fragment; a broken right ilium and a fragment of the left one; two small rib fragments; two and one half thoracic neural arch fragments; and one half of a broken cervical arch. The bones were moved during transportation, so the burial position could not be observed.

The skull pieces were clearly more prevalent in the upper level of the adult cremains (see Table 1) and in the Correspondence Analysis biplot the skull was separated from other body units (fig. 6). This difference is statistically significant for two levels and 14 skeletal units  $\chi^2=134.77$ ,  $p=0.000$ . Bone fragments were covered by a large amount of the red ochre and their colour was white, light grey or dark grey (in skull fragments). Spondylosis was not observed on the five cervical bodies present and no evidence of osteoarthritis was observed on the 10 cervical, 22 thoracic, and 2 lumbar intervertebral surfaces, or the one thoracic transverse process pit available for observation. The nuchal crest and glabella were relatively gracile (2), the supraorbital margin was scored as sharp (1/2) and the frontal bone displayed a possible eminence suggesting that the individual was female. *Cribra orbitalia* were present over the entire surface of the left orbit. A small part of the enamel of one moderately worn premolar was also present.

## Discussion and conclusion

Cremation was very rare in all periods in the Near East and the closest parallel to the cemetery excavated at Tepe Sialk are several burials from Yarim Tepe II in northern Iraq, dated to the Halaf period (Merpert & Munchaev 1987). However, the distance in time and space makes any direct connection between these sites impossible. Obviously cremation at Tepe Sialk was not accidental, although burial customs must have been quite variable. The bodies of all adult individuals recovered from the site had been cremated, but infants were both cremated and buried without burning. Also the use of red ochre, although frequent, seemed to maintain no recognisable pattern (see Table 3). In two cases fragments from various body units were completely mixed (or at least no pattern was revealed), but in two individuals (C5110 and C5113) the rough sequence of bone collection



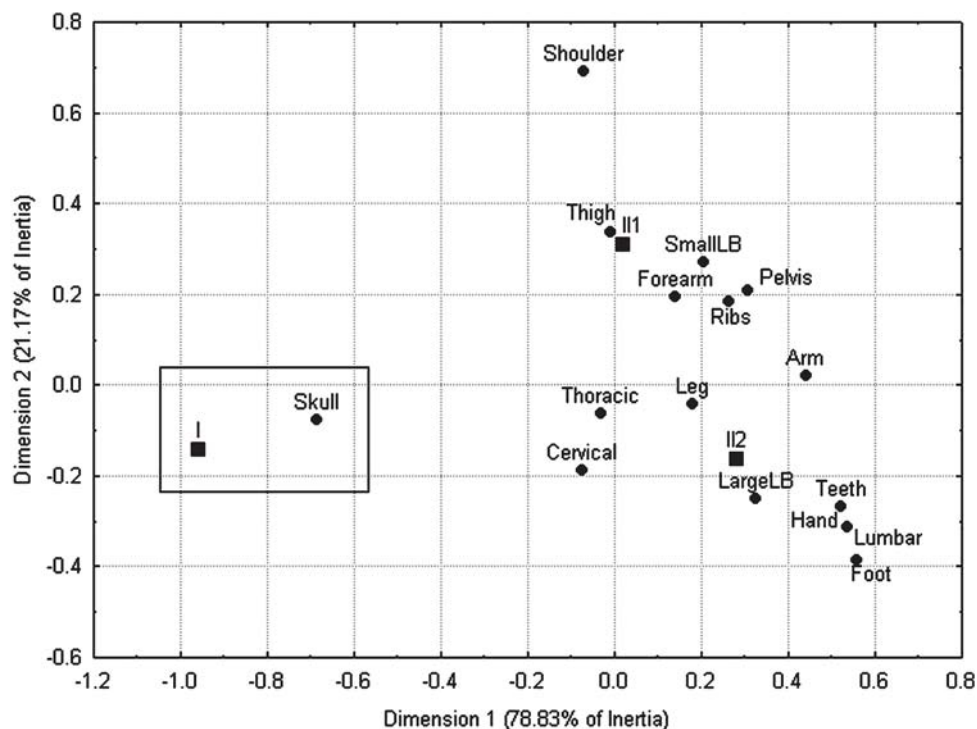


Fig. 6. Correspondence Analysis biplot for spatial distribution of bone units in C5113.

from the extinct funeral pyre may be reconstructed; in both skull fragments were located on top. The most mysterious case is the double burial C5113 containing one cremated adult individual with some bones from the unburned skeleton of an infant placed above. The subadult is disarticulated, and thus most likely in a secondary context.

The number of recognised fragments was similar in three vessels (305 in C5102, 328 in C5110, 356 in C5112), only in C5113 was higher (579) and this difference may be related to a higher fragmentation rate during the retrieval of bone fragments from the hard burial clay in the latter case. The distribution of fragments differed significantly between vessels ( $\chi^2=221.65$ ,  $p=0.000$  for four burials and 14 skeletal units), but this again may be related to differences in fragmentation. The thorax was more or less equally represented in the three vessels, but skull fragments clearly dominated in C5113 (see fig. 7), C5102 contained more fragments from the upper limb and more fragments of small hand and foot bones as well as teeth. In

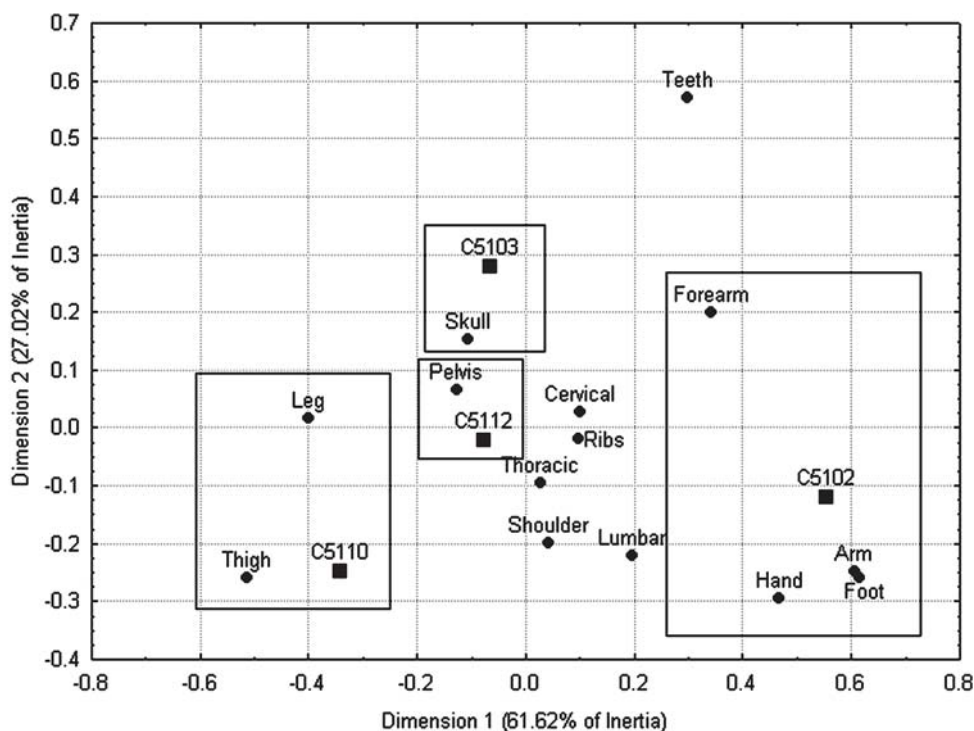


Fig. 7. Correspondence Analysis biplot for bone unit frequencies and the burials.

C5110, the lower limb was better represented and pelvic fragments were most abundant in C5112.

Since the differences in the number of fragments representing extremities may have been blurred by the degree of fragmentation (in C5102 more small pieces were recognised only as belonging to large or small long bones), the only valid conclusion is that the remains of C5102 were likely collected with greater care and more pieces of smaller bones were retrieved from the ashes than for the other two individuals. Also it is likely that the skull fragments of C5113 were more carefully retrieved from the pyre. However, there is no reliable evidence that any part of a body was omitted in any of the four cremated individuals.

Modern experiments enable at least a rough reconstruction of the temperature and the duration of heat exposure for the cremations at the site. In general, bones become black rapidly around 300°C, then gradually turn

white between 300 and 700/800°C, and at this stage extensive shrinkage occurs (Walker et al. 2008, see also Ubelaker & Rife 2007). In higher temperatures bones remain white up to ~1500°C when they start to melt. Colour observed during excavations may also be influenced by diagenetic factors, but no deposits (e.g., ashes) which could affect bone colour were found in the context of the burials.

The cremains of four individuals buried at Tepe Sialk were white and then cremated in a temperature higher than 700/800°C, but bone fragments of the individual in C5110 maintained black coloration, indicating a much lower temperature for cremation. In most cases the colour was uniform in all body units, only in C5102 were the ribs and hand bones less affected by high temperature. This may be explained by a hand dropping from the pyre during cremation, but this potential explanation is not valid for ribs. Perhaps the amount of soft tissues in the trunk protected the ribs to some extent, especially if cremation was rapid. The vertebrae of individual C5112 (and to a lesser extent two other individuals) were better preserved than other parts of the skeleton, so it is possible that the body was laid on its back during cremation and back bones were less exposed to the heat, especially if the wood for funeral pyre was laid above and not below the body. However, this interpretation is speculative and not based on any experiment.

It is virtually impossible to reconstruct any aspect of a local population with such a small sample of cremated individuals. There is no indication that the cemetery was exclusive in any way since the remains were representative of all age classes and perhaps both sexes. Metric measurements are not very reliable and non-metric traits were only occasionally observed, but it is possible that after substantial progress in the research of other human skeletal collections from Iran they will be included for comparison in larger regional samples. The incidence of spondylosis was high in individual C5112, especially in the cervical and lumbar spine, but not on the thoracic vertebrae and was probably more related to habitual overload than to advanced age-at-death for this individual (cf. Molleson 2007, Appendix 3ii).

In spite of the small sample size and sparse information concerning the archaeological context, it is possible to learn something about the custom of cremation at Tepe Sialk during the Late Neolithic. The temperature of the funeral pyre was relatively high and the remaining bone fragments were collected quite carefully, which enabled several measurements in the

case of each individual. However, there was no uniform standard of collection. While in some cases patterned collection may be observed, in other cases the distribution of bones from various body parts is random. Cremains were buried in covered bowls and in most cases showered with red ochre.

### **Appendix: Metric measurements and non-metric traits**

**C5102:** Metric measurements: vertical humeral head diameter 37, proximal radial epiphysis 18, distal radial epiphysis 28, ulnar diameter at the coronoid process 29, total height of the axis 32, without dens 18, right patella height 34, left carpal navicular breadth 23.5, right condylar process of mandible 14, left side 13, LM<sup>3</sup> mediiodistal diameter 9.7, buccolingual diameter 10.3. Non-metric traits: initial vastus notch in right patella, partial posterior bridge, probably partial lateral bridge and double upper articular surface on right side of the atlas, almost completely closed supraorbital notch on the right side, slightly rotated left maxillary second premolar.

**C5103:** Metric measurements in millimeters (right side if not stated otherwise): maximum length of the humerus 63.5 (left 63), distal metaphysis 14.5 (left 14), proximal metaphysis 11, maximum diameter at midshaft 4.5 (left 4.5), minimum diameter 4 (left 4), maximum length of the radius 53.5, anterior-posterior diameter at midshaft 3.5, medial-lateral diameter 2, iliac height 33, breadth 29.5, height of the auricular surface 11, maximum length of the femur 73, proximal metaphysis 14, anterior-posterior midshaft diameter 5, medial-lateral diameter 5.5, midshaft circumference 17.5, ischium length 17, width 11.5, pubic length 13.5, width of the scapula 28.5, length of the mandibular body 36, occipital base length 11.5, width 13. Non-metric traits: 2 large and one smaller zygomatico-facial foramina on left side, the condylar canal present on both sides, no division of hypoglossal canal on both sides. Germ formation: li<sup>1</sup> 4/5, lm<sub>2</sub> 1/2, lm<sub>1</sub> 3, li<sub>2</sub> 4/5.

**C5110:** Metric measurements: vertical diameter of the right glenoid cavity 36, breadth of the mandibular body 12. Non-metric traits: no metopic suture, single left mental foramen, hypoglossal canal without division, present condylar canal, no posterior or lateral atlas bridge on left side.

**C5112:** Metric measurements: vertical head diameter of left humerus: 43\*, femoral head >43, middle breadth of left calcaneus 39.5, breadth of talar upper articular surface 31. Non-metric traits: no metopic suture, left wide open supraorbital notch, no foramen, three distinct talar articular surface in left calcaneus.

**C5113:** Metric measurements (right side if not stated otherwise): iliac height 44.5, breadth 39\*, height of the auricular surface 16.5, left humeral distal metaphysis 21.5, maximum length of left femur 96.5\*, right proximal metaphysis 23.5, anterior-posterior midshaft diameter 7, medial-lateral-diameter 9, midshaft circumference 26, proximal metaphysis of left tibia 19, maximum diameter at the nutrient foramen 8.5 (left 9), medial-lateral diameter 8 (left 8), circumference 27.5 (left 28). Non-metric traits: no Inca bone, right flexure of the superior sagittal sulcus, no metopic suture, small single left zygomatico-facial foramen.

Table 1: Frequency of recognised bone fragments in the vessels C5102, C5110 and C5113.

Unit	C5102				C5110				C5113		
	I 1	I 2	II 1	II 2	I 1	I 2	II 1	II 2	I	II 1	II 2
Skull	17	26	5	10	15	41	14	11	59	43	45
Teeth	6	7	1	3				2		8	28
Cervical vert.	4	7		4		3	5	5	4	5	11
Thoracic vert.	10	12	4		6	3	7	10	5	9	15
Lumbar vert.	6	3	1		1	2	2	2		1	5
Shoulder	4	4		3	2	4	1	4	1	6	2
Arm	6	19	12	2	5	2		5		5	9
Forearm	1	8	3	8		2		2	2	10	11
Hand	11	8	1	2	5		4	3		2	8
Ribs	13	8	10	5	3	4	14	11	2	19	23
Pelvis	6	6	1	3	1	16	4	2	1	16	19
Thigh	2	6	1		34	23	3	11	5	20	15
Leg	1	2	1	1	6	13	5	5	3	10	18
Foot	7	8	2	4	1	2	2			1	5
Large long bones			3	11					5	25	25
Small long bones	9	11	7	9	5			3	3	17	53



Table 2: Frequency of recognised bone fragments in the vessel C5112.

Unit	I 1	I 2	I 3	I 4	II 1	II 2	II 3	II 4
Skull	8	19	11	20	13	4	7	14
Teeth		1		1		3	3	
Cervical vertebrae	1	1	2	1		3		2
Thoracic vertebrae	6	2	7	6	5	1	2	5
Lumbar vertebrae	2	1		3		3		1
Shoulder	4	1	5	2			1	2
Arm	4	2	1	2			1	7
Forearm	3	2	3	4	1	2		3
Hand			1	1	2			1
Ribs	2	4	2	4	3	1	4	6
Pelvis	7	4	6	8	1	1	7	7
Thigh	9	8	4	4	4		4	4
Leg	2	5	4	3	4	1	3	4
Foot		3	3	2	1		1	3
Large long bones						1	5	
Small long bones	12	8	1	10	4	2	3	9
Weight (g)	213.3	268.7	226.2	365.8	305.2	253.2	360.0	443.1

Table 3: General description of studied human remains.

Id	Cremation	Colour	Filling	Red ochre	Sex	Age	Pattern
C5091	+	white?	none	+++	–	0.5	not observed
C5102	+	white	clay particles	–	–	~15	unclear
C5103	–	–	compact clay	–	–	0.0	primary burial
C5110	+	black	clay particles	+	?	25–30	trunk on bottom
C5112	+	white	none	++	M?	30–50	none
C5113a	–	–	compact clay	–	–	0.5–1.0	primary burial?
C5113b	+	white	compact clay	+++	F??	adult	skull on top

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## AN EMERGING PICTURE OF THE NEOLITHIC OF NORTHEAST IRAN

BY

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**Abstract:** For many years the Neolithic of the northeastern Iranian Plateau was acknowledged by materials and data recovered from the three sites of Yarim Tappeh, Turang Tappeh and Sang-e Chakhmaq, all excavated in the 1960-1970s. In the last two decades an increasing mass of information based on archaeological fieldworks and reappraisal of archival materials have been built up that is going to significantly enhance our understanding on the Neolithic period of the region. The overwhelming majority of the information is obtained from the Shahroud area and the Gorgan plain, on the south and north of the Eastern Alborz Mountains respectively. So far, sixty two Neolithic sites have been identified in the region. This paper briefly reviews the known Neolithic sites and outlines the various implications of the newly emerging picture of the period for the northeast region of Iran.

**Keywords:** Neolithic, northeast region, Sang-e Chakhmaq, Shahroud, Gorgan plain, Jeitun Culture

### Introduction

Since Robert Braidwood's pioneering investigations in the Zagros Mountains in 1960s (1961), western Iran has been the interest area for scholars who searching the early evidence of domestications. The following decades witnessed a series of well-planned works (e.g. Hole *et al.* 1969) in the region that considerably contributed to our understanding on early stages of the village life. Renewal of the relevant investigations in the Zagros region in recent years points the significance of the region on the incipient agriculture in the Near East (e.g. Riehl *et al.* 2013; Matthews *et al.* 2013). By contrast, the eastern part of the Iranian plateau has so far only experienced sporadic archaeological investigations. Indeed, by eastward moving from Zagros the evidence for early Neolithic life become increasingly meagre (cf. Hole 1999).

On the northeastern fringe of Iranian Plateau, in southern Turkmenistan, where considered by some archaeologists as “the northeastern frontier of the ancient Near East” (Tosi 1973-74), a multiple program of surveys and excavations was undertaken in the 1950s and 1960s by Soviet archaeologists which led to the identification of a series of Neolithic sites represented under the term “Jeitun Culture” after the extensively excavated type-site of Jeitun (Masson & Sarianidi 1972). The people of this culture practiced wheat and barley agriculture and sheep and goat rising. They had mud-brick buildings and used a blade-dominated chipped stone industry. Recent works on this culture (Harris 2010) suggest that when the people of Jeitun settled the Kopet Dagh piedmonts around 6000 BC they were already full-equipped with cereal agriculture and stockbreeding. Despite extensive excavations at several Jeitun period sites in southern Turkmenistan no convincing traces of earlier stage of the Neolithic way of life are obtained, making some scholars propose the area was settled by immigrant, agro-pastoral groups who, presumably stimulated by 8.2 k climatic event, seeking “new, less risk-prone areas to cultivate” (Harris 2010: 235).

In 1960s-1970s, when the Russian archaeologists were working meticulously on the Jeitun culture sites in the Kopet Dagh foothills, evidence of Neolithic period was occurred at few sites in northeastern Iran: Yarim Tappeh, Turang Tappeh and Sang-e Chakhmaq, all considered to be related to Jeitun culture (e.g. Stronach 1972; Deshayes 1967; Masuda 1976). While recovered materials from the first two sites were essentially potsherds, extensive excavations of the Japanese team at Sang-e Chakhmaq produced substantial amounts of finds and data, but the importance of the site for tracing back the possible antecedent of Jeitun culture in a regional scale was largely disregarded due to insufficient publications (e.g. Masuda 1973, 1974, 1976). In fact, until the last decade major published information on the Neolithic of the northeast Iran (fig. 1) came from these three sites.

After the Iranian Revolution of 1979 all foreign fieldworks in Iran came to a halt; this hiatus lasted for more than two decades. Consequently, and due to the subsequent reorganization in the structure of the Iranian archaeological apparatus, the rate of archaeological investigations in the country decreased substantially for at least a decade. By resuming the archaeological fieldworks on the prehistory of northeastern region in late 1980s, an increasing amount of information came to light which remained largely unpublished or briefly published only in Persian. By summarizing

available archaeological data, both published and unpublished, the aim of this paper is to presents and assesses a newly emerging picture, though still incomplete, of the Neolithic of northeastern Iran emphasizing its close ties with the “Jeitun Culture” of southern Turkmenistan. We are not going to discuss in detail the Neolithic culture of the region, but will outline the available information on the subject to start rethinking about various aspects of the first sedentary culture in the region which flourished in the late 7<sup>th</sup> to the 6<sup>th</sup> millennia BC in this part of the Iranian Plateau.<sup>1</sup>

### Spatial and Temporal Contexts

Due to its complicated geography, Iranian Plateau exhibits diverse landscapes. In this mosaic of different ecological niches ancient cultural trends have had their own identities, as manifested in their material corpora. Acknowledging the difference evident in the material culture of various parts of the Iranian Plateau, archaeologists usually divide the territory into different regions, each characterizes roughly by its own archaeological assemblages and chronologies (e.g. Voigt & Dyson 1992: 122). In this study we deal with “the northeast region” of the Iranian Plateau which encompasses, in general, the Golestan Province (including the Gorgan Plain), Khorasan-e Shomali (Northern Khorasan) Province, northern half of Khorasan-e Razavi Province, and the eastern half of the Semnan Province (fig. 1). While this terrain is considered as a distinct cultural zone by archaeologists, there are still some differences between the cultural materials of its various segments (cf. Kohl *et al.* 1982).

In discussing the chronologies of the northeastern Iran, Voigt and Dyson (1992) divided the northeastern region into two main zones of “the Damghan/Khorasan Sequence” and “the Mazandaran/Gorgan Sequence”. They proposed sequential periods for these two sequences based on available excavated materials at that time (Table 1). Here, we do not intend to criticize the proposed cultural sequence, but rather to provide some comments as to which corresponding periods in the sequence we refer to as Neolithic in the northeastern region.

The Neolithic period of the region is best represented by the materials excavated from the twin mounds of Sang-e Chakhmaq in the Shahroud

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<sup>1</sup> In this paper the term “Iranian Plateau” is used to include Kopet Dagh Mountains, as its natural northeastern limit.



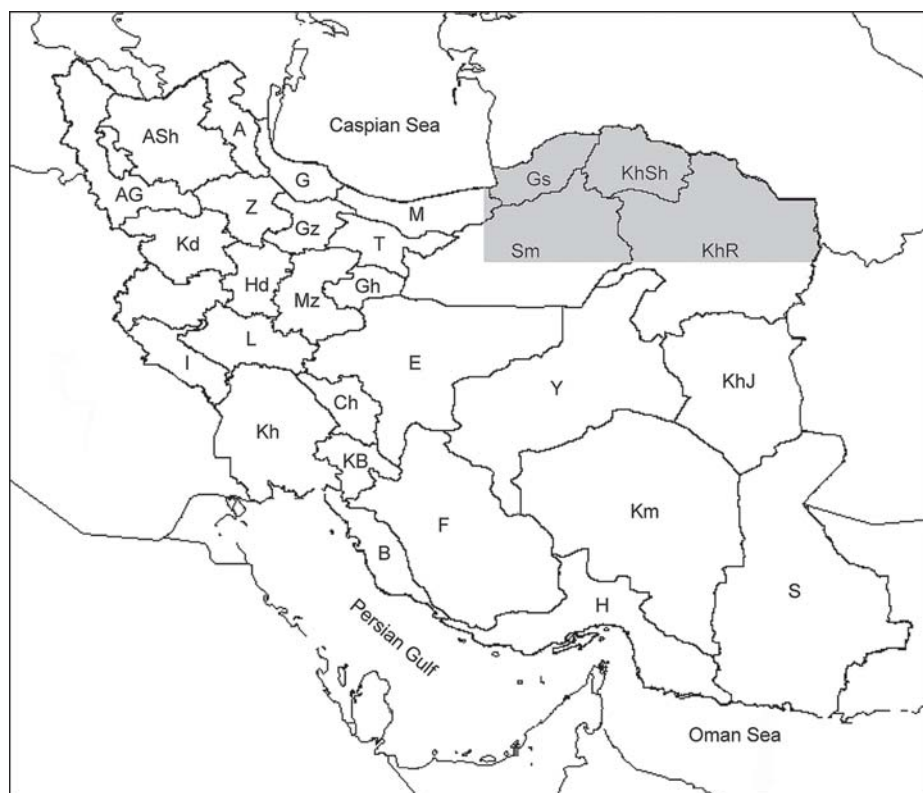


Fig. 1. Map of Iran; the northeast region is shown in gray.

area (e.g. Masuda *et al.* 2013; Tsuneki 2014a; Roustaei 2009a; Roustaei *et al.* 2015). The west mound is almost an aceramic Neolithic site with mud brick architecture, an essentially blade-dominated chipped stone industry and various types of clay, bone and stone artifacts (see Masuda 1973, 1974, 1976). Its economy included cereal cultivation and herding of sheep and goats and, to a lesser extent, hunting (Mashkour *et al.* 2014; Tengberg 2014); several AMS dating suggest a time span of c. 7100-6700 BC for the site (Nakamura 2014; Roustaei *et al.* 2015). The east mound is a ceramic Neolithic occupation with mud brick architecture, a hand-made, chaff-tempered, mainly painted ceramic tradition, and a wealth of various small objects made from different types of materials, including clay, alabaster, shell, wood and copper. The east mound inhabitants practiced mainly wheat and barley agriculture, sheep and goat herding and some

Table 1. Earlier part of the cultural sequence proposed by Voigt & Dyson (1992: 169-172, Fig. 2) for northeastern Iran.

<b>Damghan/Khorasan Sequence</b>	<b>Represented by</b>
A. <i>The Sang-e Chakhmaq period</i>	levels V-I in the West Tepe at Sang-e Chakhmaq
B. <i>The Djeitun period</i>	lower strata at Sang-e Chakhmaq East, levels VI-III
C. <i>The Cheshmeh Ali period</i>	levels II-I at the top of the East Mound at Sang-e Chakhmaq
<b>Mazandaran/Gorgan Sequence</b>	
A. <i>The Aceramic Neolithic period</i>	materials from Hotu Cave labeled “Sub-Neolithic” and Belt Cave levels 10-8
B. <i>The Software Neolithic period</i>	upper Belt Cave, levels 7-4, and by Hotu -8 to -6.2 m
C. <i>The Djeitun period</i>	the lowest strata at Yarim Tepe, or the Yarim “Early Chalcolithic”
D. <i>The Cheshmeh Ali period</i>	Hotu Cave Trench B, the 560 and 580 cm strata

hunting (Mashkour *et al.* 2014; Tengberg 2014). AMS dating suggests that the site was occupied from c. 6200 to 5300 BC (Nakamura 2014; Roustaei *et al.* 2015).

As some researchers already observed (e.g. Kohl *et al.* 1982; Kohl 1984; Harris 2010), certain aspects of the culture represented at the east mound of Sang-e Chakhmaq have close ties with those of the so-called Jeitun culture in southern Turkmenistan. While in some aspects, like pottery assemblage, there are striking similarities between the earlier phase of Sang-e Chakhmaq east mound and Jeitun,<sup>2</sup> they differ significantly in other aspects, like architecture. It is most likely that these cultures evolved from a common stem but diverged gradually through time. For the time being we put aside the detailed comparisons between different aspects of these cultures, because it make us far afield of our purpose here, which is an overview of recently acknowledged wealth of the Neolithic of northeast region. Therefore, while we are well aware of resemblances and differences between these cultures (e.g. Roustaei 2009a; Roustaei 2014; Rezvani and Roustaei, forthcoming), in this article we simply use the term “Chakhmaq/Jeitun” culture to refer to a

<sup>2</sup> Recently, a petrographic analysis on a handful of sherds from the east mound of Sang-e Chakhmaq by C. Thornton (2013) has shown that almost all ceramic types of the site were produced from the same, local clay.

Neolithic way of life that flourished in the northeastern part of the Iranian Plateau (including Kopet Dagħ) during the late 7<sup>th</sup> to late-6<sup>th</sup> millennia BC (cf. Roustaei 2012). The type-sites in which this culture is best represented are Sang-e Chakhmaq east mound in the Iranian terrain and Jeitun in southern Turkmenistan. The west mound of Sang-e Chakhmaq represents the sole excavated partially aceramic Neolithic site throughout the region.

Returning to the proposed cultural sequence for northeastern Iran by Voigt and Dyson (1992), what we refer to in this paper as “Chakhmaq/Jeitun” culture is equivalent with two periods of “The Djeitun period” and “The Cheshmeh Ali period” in the “Damghan/Khorasan” sequence and “The Djeitun period” in the Mazandaran/Gorgan sequence (Table 1).<sup>3</sup> In the northeast region, the Neolithic period represented at the east mound of Sang-e Chakhmaq is followed by the well-known Cheshmeh Ali period, dated to c. 5300/5200- 4400/4300 BC (Dyson & Thornton 2009).

### **Northeastern Iranian Plateau: Geography and Landscape**

The landscape of the northeast region is not uniform (fig. 2); while most of the region is part of the Eastern Alborz Mountain range, its northwestern part covers the whole Gorgan plain, and its southern parts, through extended foothills composed of repeated alluvial fans, merge into the desert landscape of Dasht-e Kavir (Iranian Central Desert). As a result, the northeast region exhibits different landscapes and geomorphologic units that might be divided roughly into the Gorgan plain, mountains and intermontane plains, and the southern foothill plains of the Eastern Alborz Mountain.

Gorgan plain is the most fertile part of the northeast region, which bounds on the north by the Caspian lowlands, on the west by the Caspian Sea, and on the south and east by the Alborz Mountains. Abundant precipitation, several perennial rivers, including Gorgan River as the major river in the region, and easy access to various natural resources would have been environmental advantages to promote human occupation in the past, as suggested by the high frequency of sites of different periods in there

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<sup>3</sup> What they label “Cheshmeh Ali period” at the east mound (Table 1), is in fact the final stage of the ceramic Neolithic of the Chakhmaq sequence, best represented by the materials recovered from Kalateh Khan (Roustaei 2011; Roustaei, forthcoming). Voigt and Dyson probably followed Masuda (1984: 210) to ascribe the top two levels at the east mound to Cheshmeh Ali period (cf. Tsuneki 2014b,c).

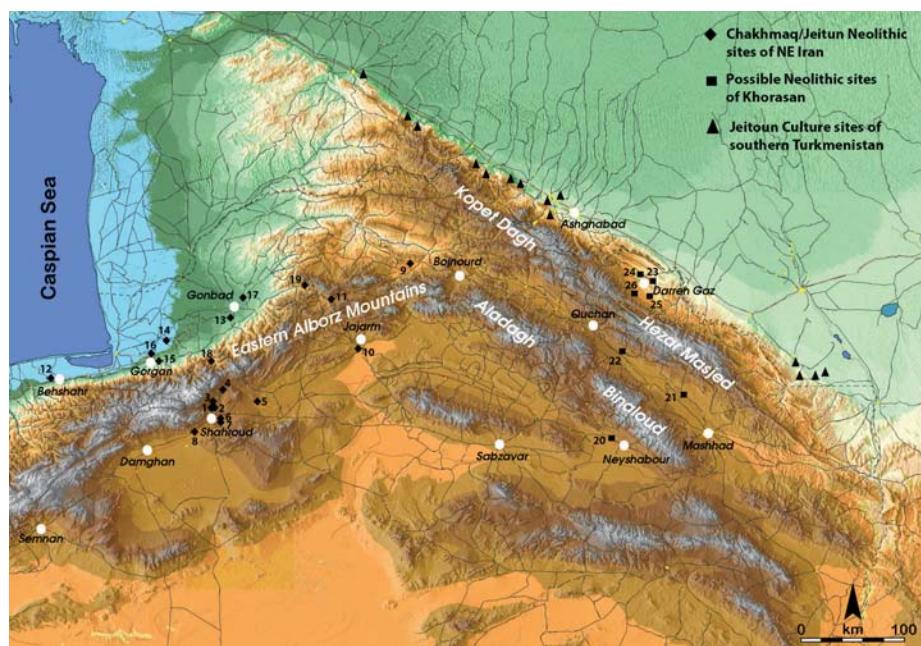


Fig. 2. Topographic map of the northeast region and location of the discussed Neolithic sites in the text: 1. Sang-e Chakhmaq, the west mound; 2. Sang-e Chakhmaq, the east mound; 3. Deh Kheir; 4. Siah Rigi; 5. Qaleh Tappeh; 6. Kheir Abad 1; 7. Kheir Abad 2; 8. Kalateh Khan; 9. Qaleh Khan; 10. Tappeh Pahlevan; 11. Armardlou; 12. Tough Tappeh; 13. Yarim Tappeh; 14. Turang Tappeh; 15. Poukerdowal; 16. Narges Tappeh; 17. Aq Tappeh; 18. Tappeh Chino; 19. Tappeh Latteh; 20. Tappeh Balouch; 21. Qareh Tappeh; 22. Qias Abad; 23. Yarim Tappeh; 24. Nowrouz Tappeh; 25. Nowkhandan; 26. DG 19. (The newly identified sites of the Gorgan plain (43 sites) are not shown in the map.)

(cf. Abbasi 2011, Maps 5-14; Arne 1945, Fig. 3). Gorgan River, with its E-W course, marks as a sharp environmental boundary in the plain, where to the south is fertile land with rich cultivations merging into forested foot-hills of the Alborz farther south, while to the north lies steppe, desert-like terrains fading into bleached stretches of the eastern littorals of the Caspian Sea in Turkmenistan (cf. Wilkinson *et al.* 2013).

Alborz Mountain range, along with Kopet Dagh, Binaloud, Allah-o Akbar and Hezar Masjed ranges, characterize the landscape of the northern Khorasan.<sup>4</sup> Geographical alignments of these major ranges, including their

<sup>4</sup> By “northern Khorasan” we refer to the two provinces of Northern Khorasan and northern half of the Khorasan-e Razavi (KhSh and KhR in fig. 1).





Fig. 3. A selection of the Neolithic sherds from Yarim Tappeh, Gorgan plain (courtesy of National Museum of Iran).

numerous minor extensions, produced small and large intermontane plains and valleys. The precipitation and running water of this sub-zone is significantly less than the Gorgan plain; nevertheless, there are good number of small, perennial and seasonal streams and numerous springs. Major permanent rivers of this part are Kashaf Roud and Atrak; the former originates from Hezar Masjed and Binaloud mountains west of Mashhad and ultimately flows into Turkmenistan, where it disappears into the sands of the Karakum desert, while the latter originates from Hezar Masjed mountains to the north of Quchan and flows to the west where it pours into the Caspian Sea. Today, a significant portion of the northeast population lives in this part.

The southern part of the northeast region is characterized by extended piedmonts of the Eastern Alborz. In general, it comprises the foothill plains

of southern flank of Alborz Mountains that face the desert to the south. Proximity to Dasht-e Kavir desert has had a significant impact on prevailing weather system of this zone. Most of these foothill plains are narrow, elongated stretches along mountain ridges. In this sense, this sub-region/zone is, to some extent, similar to the northern piedmonts of the Kopet Dag Mountain. The main highway from Tehran to Mashhad (west-east direction) runs through these foothill plains, where in the north lies the Alborz Mountain and in the south is desert landscape. Today, no major population center exists on south of this hypothetical east-west line, except small desert hamlets and villages. The plains of Garmsar, Damghan, Shahroud and Sabzavar are examples of such foothill plains. Most of these plains are just formed at the end of large alluvial fans down the Alborz (see Roustaei 2012).

### **Research Background Prior to the Iranian Revolution of 1979**

Until the Iranian Revolution, only three Neolithic sites had been identified in the northeast region: Yarim Tappeh and Turang Tappeh, both situated in the Gorgan plain, and Sang-e Chakhmaq in the Shahroud area (e.g. Kohl 1984; Coolidge 2005). Excavations at Yarim Tappeh and Turang Tappeh produced just a small collection of Neolithic materials. While in the former, the Neolithic potsherds were reported in the lowermost levels of the stratigraphic trench (Crawford 1963) (fig. 3), the few Neolithic potsherds from the latter came from mud bricks of the later periods (Deshayes 1967; Dyson 1991). In a short, general report on Yarim Tappeh excavation, Stronach mentioned the similarity between the potteries of the earliest deposits at the site (Period 1) to those from Jeitun in Turkmenistan (1972: 22); the final report of this fieldwork has never been published. Similarly, in his paper on painted potteries of Turang Tappeh, Deshayes (1967) presented a detailed description and discussion of the recovered materials and suggested that the Neolithic pottery of the site show some resemblance with those from “Djeitun Culture” in Turkmenistan and Sialk I assemblage in the Iranian Central Plateau. He published the images of four sherds which were recovered from “Sondage A, sol 14” (Deshayes 1967, Pl. Ia); they have close resemblance to the known Sang-e Chakhmaq Neolithic type materials from the Shahroud sites (see below).

While Yarim Tappeh and Turang Tappeh provided just very limited Neolithic cultural materials, extensive excavations at Sang-e Chakhmaq



produced tremendous amount of Neolithic materials. Regrettably, this unique collection never published even to a modest extent (but see Masuda *et al.* 2013)<sup>5</sup>. Four seasons of excavations at twin mounds of Sang-e Chakhmaq, from 1971 to 1977, ended with some 1800 square meters exposures, which testify to the wealth of the recovered materials (see Roustaei 2009b).<sup>6</sup> In his short, preliminary reports, Masuda published just very limited items and few drawings of the potsherds (Masuda 1973, 1974, 1976). He occasionally mentioned the similarity between potteries of lower levels of the east mound to the “Djeitun” potteries, with no further elaboration on other aspects of the culture (Masuda 1976; Masuda *et al.* 2013).

In general, limited exposure and paucity of recovered materials at Yarim Tappeh and Turang Tappeh on one hand, and brief and cursory preliminary reports on Sang-e Chakhmaq excavations on the other hand, hindered interested scholars to make firm conclusions as to what extent the Neolithic materials of these sites are related to the so-called “Jeitun Culture” of southern Turkmenistan. Actually having not enough materials at hand, most archaeologists had no option but comment cautiously on the nature of the Neolithic of northeast Iran and its possible relations with the Jeitun Culture (see, for example, Kohl 1984: 46; Coolidge 2005: 119-122).

### Recent Neolithic Findings from Northeast Iran

Since almost two decades an increasing amount of information is produced on the Neolithic period of the northeast region. The major relevant fieldworks have occurred in the two provinces of Semnan and Golestan (Gorgan). Although some publications on these fieldworks are available (e.g. Malek Shahmirzadi & Nokandeh 2000), most of them are still to be published, or have been published briefly in Persian (e.g. Nokandeh 2012). To present the recent Neolithic findings of the northeast region we would divide the area into four arbitrary zones: Shahroud area, Behshahr area, Khorasan intermontane plains and the Gorgan plain. These subdivisions

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<sup>5</sup> This article is an English translation of Masuda’s 1977 preliminary report on Sang-e Chakhmaq excavations in Japanese.

<sup>6</sup> After passing away of the late professor Masuda in 2010, Akira Tsuneki, from Tsukuba University, Japan, started a program to publish the final report of the excavations at this important site (Tsuneki, pers. comm. Feb. 2014, Tsukuba University).

roughly follow the landscape classification of the northeast region suggested above.

### Shahrud Area

Shahrud area, including two adjacent, connected plains of Shahrud and Bastam, lies on the southern foothills of the Eastern Alborz Mountains, some 400 km east of Tehran. From the west, Shahrud plain adjoins Damghan plain with the well-known sites of Tappeh Hesar and Qumis (Schmidt 1937; Hansmann & Stronach 1968). The small plain of Bastam, where Sang-e Chakhmaq is located, lies just to the north of the Shahrud plain. The outstanding geomorphological features of these plains are overlapping alluvial fans down the southern slopes of the Alborz Mountains. Almost all recorded prehistoric sites of the plains are associated with terminal tip of these alluvial fans (fig. 4; see also Roustaei 2012).

So far eight Neolithic sites have been recorded in Shahrud area (Roustaei 2012) (fig. 4; Table 2). Among them, Sang-e Chakhmaq was discovered by Masuda in 1969 and extensively excavated during four seasons, from 1971 to 1977 (Masuda 1973, 1974, 1976, 1984; Masuda *et al.* 2013). The site consists of two mounds, labeled as west and east mounds, some 100 m apart (fig. 5). The west mound represents a partially aceramic settlement dated to c. 7100-6700 BC (Nakamura 2014; Roustaei *et al.* 2015), while the east mound yielded a ceramic Neolithic sequence dated to c. 6200 to 5300 BC (fig. 6). Overall, the pottery assemblage of the east mound, especially its lower levels, lithic collection and certain items of the small finds are closely comparable to those of Jeitun culture of southern Turkmenistan (figs. 7 & 8; Roustaei 2014).

In a list of visited sites published in 1976, Masuda introduced another Neolithic site in Shahrud area as “Tappeh Dexe” (Masuda 1976: 66). This site, that should be “Tappeh Deh Kheir”, is located just a few kilometers north of Sang-e Chakhmaq (fig. 4), and was introduced in some detail for the first time by Hasan Rezvani (1999).<sup>7</sup> In 2004 and 2006 Rezvani

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<sup>7</sup> It should be noted that Masuda in some of his publications used the letter “x” instead of “kh” in writing Sang-e Chakhmaq (for example in Masuda 1974). So, it is possible that by “Dexe” he meant “Dekhe” which is a wrong pronunciation of “Deh Kheir”. The address of the site, “7 km north of Bastam”, and its suggested dating, “prehistoric”, is conformed to Tappeh Deh Kheir (Masuda 1976: 66).

Table 2. The known Chakhmaq/Jeitun Neolithic sites of the northeast Iran.

The Area/sites	References
<b>SHAHROUD AREA</b>	
Sang-e Chakhmaq East Mound	Masuda 1973, 1974, 1976; Masuda <i>et al.</i> 2013; Roustaei 2012; Roustaei <i>et al.</i> 2015
Sang-e Chakhmaq West Mound	Masuda 1973, 1974, 1976; Masuda <i>et al.</i> 2013; Roustaei 2012; Roustaei <i>et al.</i> 2015
Deh Kheir	Rezvani 1999, 2006; Roustaei 2012
Siah Rigi	Rezvani 1999; Roustaei 2012
Qaleh Tappeh	Roustaei 2012
Kheir Abad 1	Roustaei 2012
Kheir Abad 2	Roustaei 2012
Kalateh Khan	Roustaei 2012
<b>BEHSHAHR AREA</b>	
Tough Tappeh	Mahfroozi 2003
<b>KHORASAN</b>	
Tappeh Qaleh Khan	Garazhian 2008; Garazhian <i>et al.</i> forthcoming
Tappeh Pahlavan	Vahdati 2010
Tappeh Armardlou	Azarnoush and Helwing 2005
<b>GORGAN PLAIN</b>	
Yarim Tappeh	Crawford 1963; Stronach 1972
Turang Tappeh	Deshayes 1967
Aq Tappeh	Malek Shahmirzadi and Nokandeh 2000
Poukerdowal	Abbasi <i>et al.</i> forthcoming
Narges Tappeh	Abbasi 2011
Tappeh Chino	Nokandeh 2012
Tappeh Latteh	Azarnoush and Helwing 2005
43 “newly recognized” sites	Nokandeh, pers. com.; Abbasi 2011

excavated the site for two seasons (Rezvani 2006). The recovered materials, especially pottery collections, are identical to those of Sang-e Chakhmaq east mound (figs. 7 & 8). Radiocarbon datings suggest a late 7<sup>th</sup> to early 6<sup>th</sup> millennia BC for the lower deposits of the site (Rezvani 2006), but there are still later Neolithic deposits as suggested by pottery evidence (Rezvani & Roustaei, forthcoming). Rezvani identified another Neolithic site, Siah

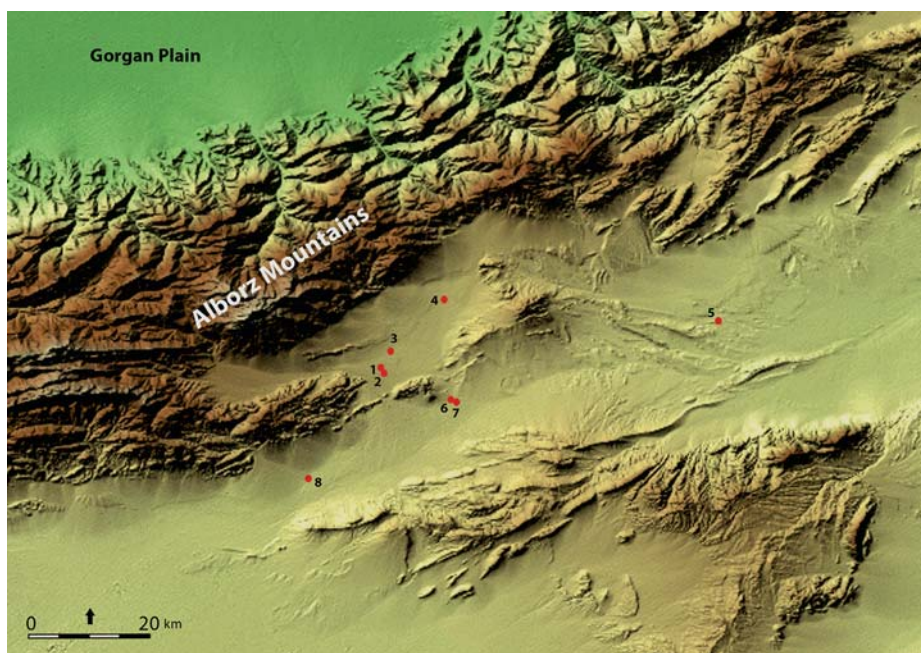


Fig. 4. Distribution of the Neolithic sites in the Shahroud area; 1. Sang-e Chakhmaq west mound; 2. Sang-e Chakhmaq east mound; 3. Deh Kheir; 4. Siah Rigi; 5. Qaleh Tappeh; 6. Kheir Abad 1; 7. Kheir Abad 2; 8. Kalateh Khan.  
(The map was created by M. Zeidi.)

Rigi (means literally “black gravel” in Persian), located on the northern end of the Bastam plain, about 17 km north of Sang-e Chakhmaq (fig. 4), with identical potsherds to those from the Sang-e Chakhmaq east mound (fig. 7) (Rezvani 1999; Roustaei 2012).

In 2004, the author conducted an archaeological survey in the Shahroud and Bastam plains with emphasis on the landscape approach (Roustaei 2012). As a consequence four more sites of Qaleh Tappeh, Kheir Abad 1, Kheir Abad 2 and Kalateh Khan were recorded (Table 2); except Kheir Abad 2 (possibly an aceramic Neolithic site), the sites partially overlap with the Neolithic sequence of Sang-e Chakhmaq east mound. In 2005 we opened seven test trenches at Kalateh Khan which provided evidence of a mud brick settlement with pottery collection reminiscent to those of upper levels at Sang-e Chakhmaq east mound; several AMS dating suggests a mid-6<sup>th</sup> millennium BC date for the site (Roustaei 2011; Roustaei, forthcoming) (figs. 7 & 8). So far, Kalateh Khan represents the westernmost

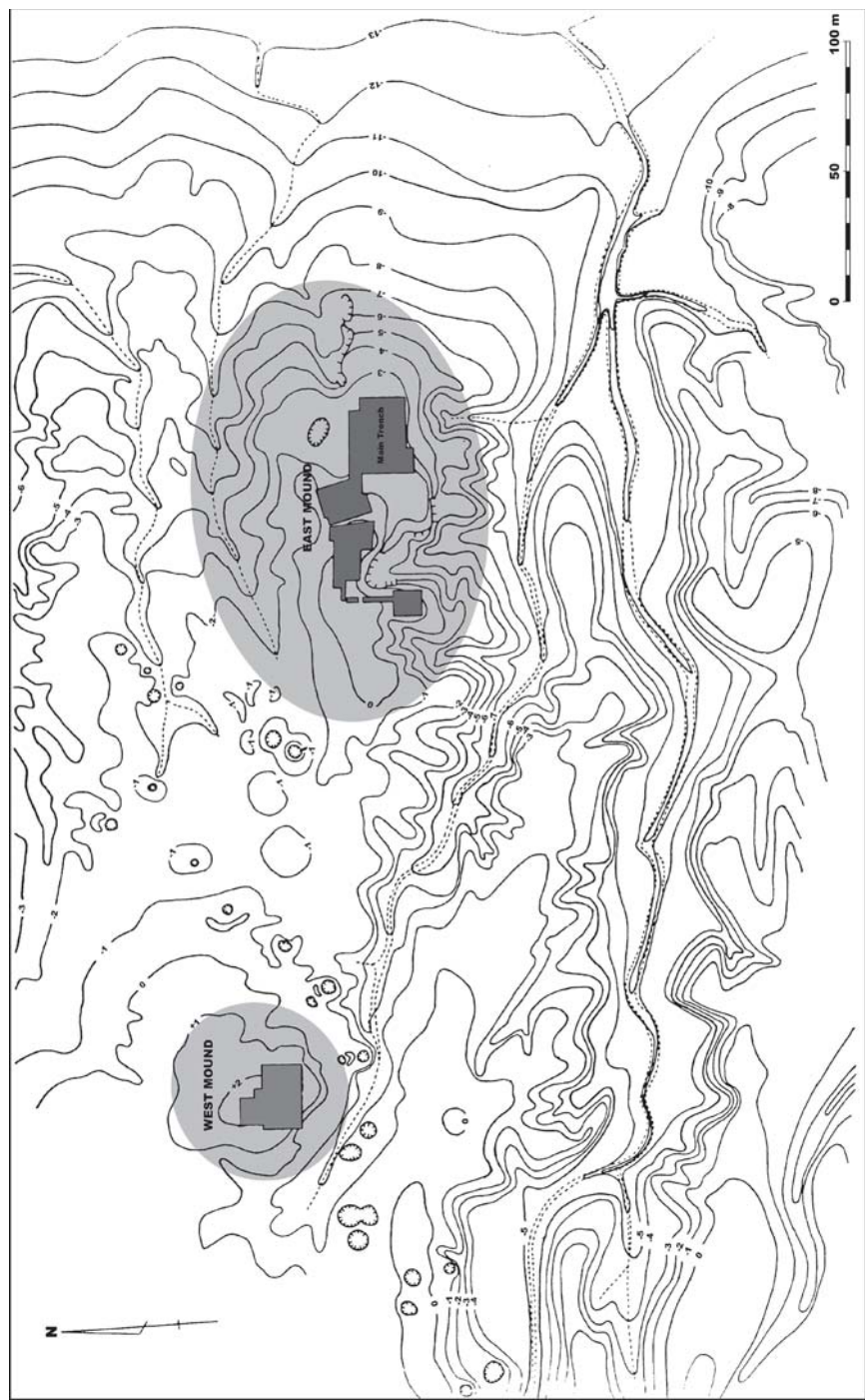


Fig. 5. Topographic map of Sang-e Chakhmaq (adapted from Masuda 1984, Fig. 1).





Fig. 6. The Main Trench of the Japanese in Sang-e Chakhmaq east mound.  
The stratigraphic cut of 2009 is seen on the right side of the picture.

known settlement containing the Chakhmaq/Jeitun cultural materials on the southern flanks of the Alborz Mountains (fig. 2).<sup>8</sup> In addition, in 2009 the author made stratigraphic excavations at both mounds of Sang-e Chakhmaq to obtain sequential materials and C14 samples (Roustaei 2009a; Roustaei *et al.* 2015).

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<sup>8</sup> Damghan plain on the west of Shahroud plain has yielded, to date, no Neolithic sites with materials comparable to those of Sang-e Chakhmaq east mound, though it was surveyed several times and proved to be archaeologically rich (e.g. Trinkhaus 1989; Sharifi 1997). In some archaeological literatures the site of Shir Âshiân (wrongly written in some references as “Shir-i Shian; e.g. Dyson & Thornton 2009), in Damghan Plain, has been mistakenly ascribed to the Neolithic (Jeitun) period (e.g. Harris & Gosden 1996: 382), whereas it is a late Cheshmeh Ali period (mid-fifth millennium BC) site (see Dyson & Thornton 2009).



Fig. 7. A selection of the Neolithic sherds from the Shahroud Area sites: 1, 5, 10, 15: Sang-e Chakhmaq east mound; 2, 6, 11: Kheir Abad 1; 3, 7, 12: Siah Rigi; 4, 13: Deh Kheir; 8, 9: Qaleh Tappeh; 14, 17, 18, 19: Kalateh Khan.

### Khorasan Intermontane Plains

Surprisingly, very few Neolithic sites, with materials comparable to those of Sang-e Chakhmaq east mound, are identified in the vast region of Khorasan. So far just three certain Neolithic sites are known in this zone: Tappeh Qaleh Khan, Tappeh Pahlevan and Tappeh Armarlou.

Tappeh Qaleh Khan is located 23 km west of the town of Ashkhaneh, on western part of the Northern Khorasan province, some 200 km north-east of Sang-e Chakhmaq (fig. 2). The site, c. 6 ha in area and 15 m in height (fig. 9), has been subjected to stratigraphic sounding in 2006 and 2009 and proved to have Neolithic deposits at its deepest levels (Garazhian 2008) with comparable pottery to those of Sang-e Chakhmaq east mound. A series of C14 dating of the Neolithic deposits suggest that the site was occupied since the first half of the 6<sup>th</sup> millennium BC (Garazhian *et al.* forthcoming), which, along with the recovered pottery collection, well conforms partially to the Sang-e Chakhmaq east mound sequence.



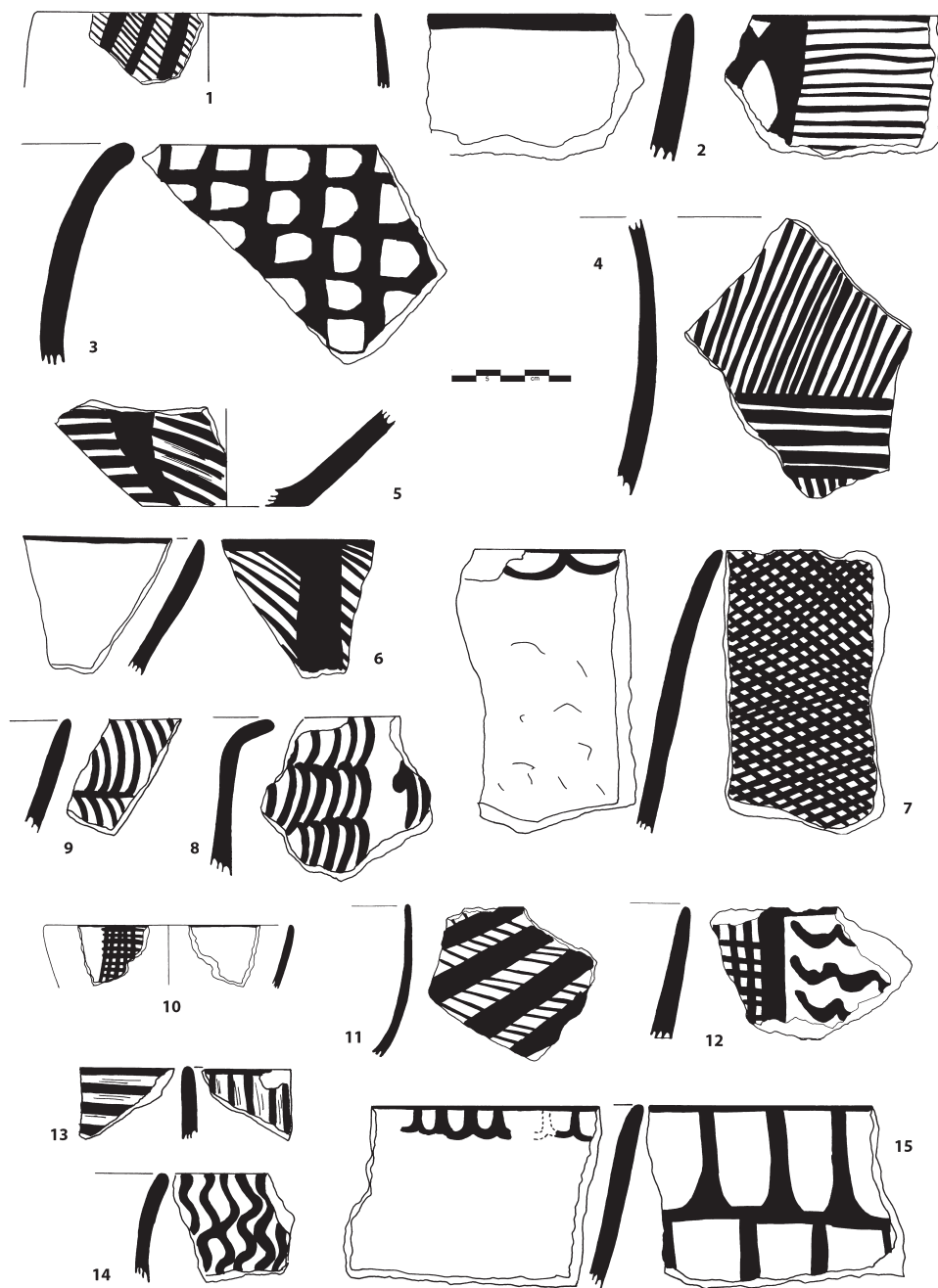


Fig. 8. A selection of the Neolithic sherds from the Shahroud Area sites: 1-3: Deh Kheir; 4-6: Kalateh Khan; 7-9: Qaleh Tappeh; 10-12: Siah Rigi; 13-15: Kheir Abad 1.



Fig. 9. Qaleh Khan.

The other known Neolithic site in northern Khorasan is Tappeh Pahlavan. This multi-period site is located 4 km southwest of Jajarm, a small town about 130 km northeast of Sang-e Chakhmaq (fig. 2). The most prominent part of the site is a mound, 14 m high, surrounded by a fortification wall dating to the Islamic period, and in total measures 2.5 ha (Vahdati 2010). The site has not been excavated, but surveyed and sampled. Surface materials suggest that the site was occupied during the Neolithic, Chalcolithic and Islamic periods. Some of the surface sherds are comparable to those of Sang-e Chakhmaq east mound and also Aq Tappeh on the Gorgan plain (e.g. Vahdati 2010, Figs. 2 & 3).

During an archaeological survey in the forested and mountainous landscapes of the eastern parts of the Golestan province at least five Neolithic sites, including Tappeh Armarlou, were discovered (Azarnoush & Helwing 2005: 199-200). The site is located in the westernmost part of northern Khorasan, in an elongated, small intermontane plain. Although images just of a few sherds are published (Azarnoush & Helwing 2005, Figs. 15 & 17),

close similarities with assemblage from Sang-e Chakhmaq east mound is clearly evident.

In addition to the aforementioned sites, there are a number of sites distributed across the northern Khorasan which claimed to have comparable materials with those of Sang-e Chakhmaq and Jeitun (Garazhian 2008). One of these is Tappeh Baluch, located 17 km northwest of Neyshabour, some 330 km east of Sang-e Chakhmaq (fig. 2). The site was excavated in 2011 and briefly reported (Garazhian 2012). Baluch seems to be formed on top of a natural gravel hill as a multi-period site. The excavator suggests seasonal occupation at the site because no solid architecture was discovered in the excavated trenches. Judging from the published material and data, it is hard to say whether the site fits into the Chakhmaq/Jeitun Neolithic cultural zone. Besides, it has been noted that “less than 5% of ceramics were painted” (Garazhian 2012: 30), which is in sharp contrast with the pattern observed in Sang-e Chakhmaq pottery assemblage in which almost 50% of the whole corpus is painted (Roustaei 2014; Roustaei *et al.* 2015).

There are some sites, clustered in the Darre Gaz plain near Iran’s border with Turkmenistan, which has been claimed to be Neolithic in date based on their surface materials (cf. Harris 2010: 51). These are Yarim Tappeh, Nourouz Tappeh, Nowkhandan and a site designated by Kohl and Heskell as DG 19 (Kohl & Heskell 1980) (fig. 2). These sites were discovered and introduced first by Kohl and Heskell (1980), who suggest that some material of the latter is similar to those from Jeitun sites in Turkmenistan and Yarim Tappeh in the Gorgan plain (Kohl & Heskell 1980: 163). Later, the plain of Darreh Gaz was resurveyed by Garazhian in 1997 and 1998 (2005). He assigned the two sites of Yarim Tappeh and Nourouz Tappeh to the Neolithic period and suggested that their material could be compared with Jeitun sites in Turkmenistan, but provided no relevant documentations (see also Harris 2010: 51, where, referring to information provided by Garazhian, he mentions the presence of a third possible Neolithic site of Tappeh Nowkhandan).

### **Behshahr Area**

Behshahr Area, on southeastern corner of the Caspian Sea, is a natural continuation of the Gorgan plain. The fame of Behshahr goes back to the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, when Carleton S. Coon excavated two cave-sites of Hotu

and Kamarband (Belt), both Mesolithic (Epipaleolithic) onward, on the Caspian littoral near Behshahr (Coon 1957). Since then two more cave-sites of Ali Tappeh and Komishan are identified and excavated, both of which proved to have Mesolithic and later period deposits as well (McBurney 1968; Vahdati Nasab *et al.* 2011). While in some earlier works (e.g. Voigt and Dyson 1992: 172) the presence of “Jeitun-like” pottery has been reported from Hotu and Belt caves, recent restudy of the Coon’s documents and recovered materials, stored in the university of Pennsylvania, showed neither of caves contain such cultural materials (Gregg & Thornton 2012).

Since 2001 a series of archaeological survey has been launched in Behshahr and its surrounding areas in order to assess the potential of the area for further prehistoric investigations (Mahforuzi 2003; Ramazanpour *et al.* 2013). So far, altogether, more than 20 sites have been identified which claimed to have some Neolithic components, including Tough Tappeh, Tappeh Cheldin, Narges Katti, Komishani and Tappeh Abbasi (Mahfrozzi 2003; see also Harris 2010: 50). The surface sherd collections from these sites are small, therefore hinder to make firm conclusion as to what extent these materials fit into the Chakhmaq/Jeitun assemblage. Nevertheless, small scale sounding at one of them, Tough Tappeh, produced a handful of sherds (fig. 10), some of them with typical motifs to those we know from Sang-e Chakhmaq east mound and Aq Tappeh near Gonbad (Ali Mahfrozzi, pers. comm.).<sup>9</sup>

### Gorgan Plain

As previously mentioned, until the Iranian Revolution of 1979 just the two sites of Yarim Tappeh and Turang Tappeh in the Gorgan plain provided some evidence of the Neolithic period in the region (fig. 3). Until the late 1990s only few major, integrated fieldworks were conducted to document the ancient sites in the plain. In 1999 during construction of Golestan Dam on the eastern part of the plain, salvage archaeological surveys were conducted on the area of dam’s reservoir, resulted in identification of sev-

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<sup>9</sup> In May 2014 surface sherds of five sites was shown to the author in Gohar Tappeh Research Base in Behshahr. Although the visited collections had “archaic” characteristics, like thick clay slip, chaff temper and burnished surfaces, except the recovered materials from Tough Tappeh, none were reminiscent to those of Sang-e Chakhmaq east mound.



Fig. 10. The Neolithic sherds from Tappeh Aq Tappeh's lower levels (courtesy of Ali Mahfrouzi).

eral endangered sites (Nokandeh 1999). In winter 2000 a team, directed by S. Malek Shahmirzadi, partially excavated the Neolithic site of Aq Tappeh, some 10 km northeast of Gonbad-e Kavous (Malek Shahmirzadi & Nokandeh 2000).

Aq Tappeh is a small mounded site, about 1 ha in area and 10 m in height, but the archaeological deposits are less than 2.3 m in depth. Total area of the excavations measures some 185 m<sup>2</sup>. No coherent architecture from the Neolithic context was revealed, except severely damaged and eroded courses of *pise* walls. Excavations at the site revealed three periods of the Neolithic, Cheshmeh Ali, and the Iron Age/Achaemenid, the latter documented only based on a number of graves dug into the prehistoric deposits (Malek Shahmirzadi & Nokandeh 2000). According to the published report, the depth of the Neolithic deposits hardly exceeds 40 cm, indicates presumably a rather short period of occupation. Strangely enough,

not a single piece of intact or broken clay figurine, no hearth and even no fragment of animal bone associated with the Neolithic deposits was recorded. No radiocarbon dating is available, but pottery typology shows an obvious link with those of Sang-e Chakhmaq east mound corpus (fig. 11).

During excavations at Aq Tappeh, another Neolithic site, Poukerdowal, has been reported to be endangered due to some constructions at immediate periphery of the town of Gorgan. The Aq Tappeh's excavation team visited the site and collected some surface sherds identical to those of Aq Tappeh (Malek Shahmirzadi & Nokandeh 2000: 164). In damaged condition, the site measures less than 0.5 ha, but what remains of original mound stands 2.5 m above the ground. This multi-period site (Neolithic, Bronze Age, Parthian and mid-Islamic) was excavated in several small trenches, 2 x 1.5 m, for stratigraphy and delimitation purposes in 2007/2008 (Abbasi *et al.* forthcoming; see also Yousefi Zoshk & Zeighami 2013). The motifs of the painted sherds from deepest layers leave no doubt that the site contains Neolithic deposits, as suggested by characteristic designs identical to those of Sang-e Chakhmaq east mound and Aq Tappeh (cf. Yousefi Zoshk & Zeighami 2013).

During an archaeological survey in 1999 a site, Tappeh Latteh, was identified in the wooded highlands of the eastern Golestan province (Azarnoush & Helwing 2005: 199-200). This was the first Neolithic site reported from the forested area. Save for a handful of potsherds, with close resemblance to those of well-known Neolithic sites of the Shahroud area (Roustaei 2012), no further information is released from the site.

Another site with Neolithic evidence in the Gorgan plain is Narges Tappeh, an essentially Bronze Age site, just 7 km northwest of the town of Gorgan. The site was excavated extensively during a rescue program in 2006 (Abbasi 2011). Narges Tappeh is a multi-period, low, but extensive mound with remains of Islamic, Iron Age, Bronze Age and Chalcolithic periods. In the deepest levels of the stratigraphic trench few Neolithic sherds, identical to those of Aq Tappeh, Turang Tappeh and Yarim Tappeh, were discovered (Abbasi 2011: 68, 239, Pl.15.1).

Recently, in 2011, a Neolithic site, Tappeh Chino, was found deep in the wooded valleys to the south of Ali Abad, some 33 km east of the town of Gorgan (fig. 2). The site, 70 x 90 m in area and 6 m in height, is located in a side valley, at an elevation of 743 m asl., and surrounded by dense forests. Small scale sounding at the immediate periphery of the site for delimitation purposes, through seven small, 1 x 1 m, trenches revealed pottery of Islamic, late historic and the Neolithic periods (Nokandeh 2012).



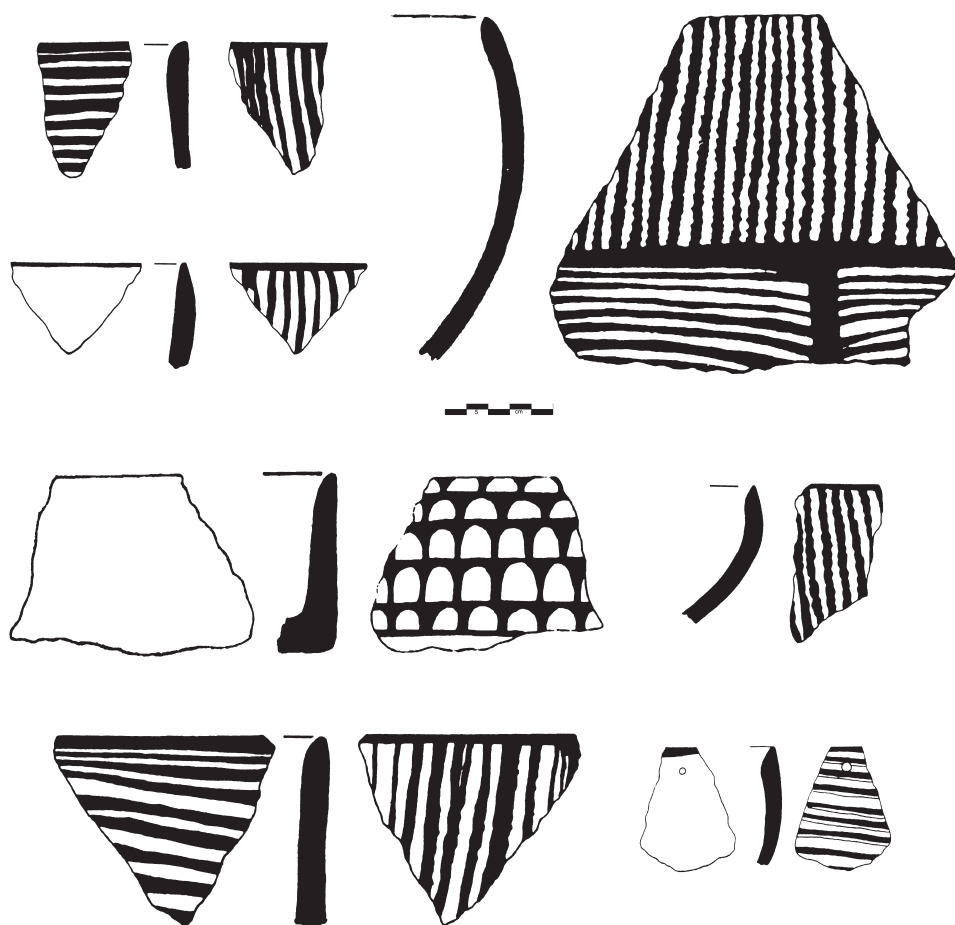


Fig. 11. A selection of the Neolithic sherds from Aq Tappeh (Malek Shahmirzadi & Nokandeh 2000).

The most important finding pertaining to the Neolithic of the northeast region is reappraisal of numerous pottery packs of previous archaeological surveys and occasional visits conducted on the Gorgan plain in the last 20 years (J. Nokandeh, pers. comm.). This was done as part of reorganizing the archaeological research at Golestan Province launched in 2009. Reappraisal of about 850 pottery packs (sites) showed that there are at least 43 sites with pottery collection reminiscent of the corpus from Sang-e



Chakhmaq east mound.<sup>10</sup> So far, none of the pottery collections were published, but a list and distribution map of the Neolithic sites is available (Abbasi 2011, Map 5). At the moment we have not precise information about the size, nature and the preservation of the sites, but all pottery packs have site name and their coordinates is recorded in the archival documents of the province. In March 2015 a revisiting project, directed by J. Nokandeh and the author has been launched to document thoroughly the newly recognized Neolithic sites of Gorgan Plain and the adjacent valleys.

## Discussion

The only recently published source that covers part of the presented new information on the Neolithic of the northeast region is Harris' contribution to the origin of agriculture in Western Central Asia (2010). In his book, Harris, through e-mail communication with Iranian colleagues, including the author, provides a general picture of the current state of the Neolithic investigations in the region that is entirely the outcome of the recent field-works conducted by Iranian archaeologists in the last two decades.

For years, the only available information about the Neolithic of northeast Iran was restricted to the three sites of Yarim Tappeh, Turang Tappeh and Sang-e Chakhmaq (e.g. Coolidge 2005: 14). As mentioned above, the meager published materials and information on these sites prevented scholars from gaining a factual understanding on the Neolithic period in this part of Iran and consequently hindered them from making a reasonable analysis on the possible relations of the sites with those of the so-called "Jeitun Culture" in southern Turkmenistan. Nevertheless, considering the geographical distribution of the Jeitun sites, all located in northern piedmonts of the Kopet Dagh Mountain range, i.e., the NE end of the Iranian Plateau, some researchers inferred that at least part of the possible solution to the "Jeitun dilemma" should be sought in the south, in the Iranian Plateau (e.g. Harris & Gosden 1996: 381). Indeed, because of geographical proximity and close similarities between material cultures, the Neolithic of northeastern Iran and "Jeitun Culture" of southern Turkmenistan would not be properly understood in isolation. If after half a century of archaeological investigations on

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<sup>10</sup> In two occasions, in November 2009 and May 2014, the author could see almost all of the pottery collections at "the Gorgan Wall Research Center" in Gorgan. All observed pottery collections unquestionably belonged to the Sang-e Chakhmaq Neolithic culture.

Neolithic sites of the northern piedmonts of the Kopet Dagħ we still have a rather vague and skewed picture of the neolithisation in southern Turkmenistan, it was because the lack of systematic investigation in northeast Iran, as the probable origin of this culture (cf. Kohl 1984).

As readers may realize, of utmost importance is the new discoveries from the Gorgan plain, which is going to profoundly enhance our understanding of the Neolithic of northeastern Iranian Plateau. The “rediscovery” of 43 sites through reappraisal of the pottery packs from previous surveys in the Gorgan plain imply that there would be more sites in the plain to be discovered. According to archival records of the province, none of the archaeological surveys conducted on the plain in the last two decades was considered to be intensive. Obviously there are more low mounds or sherd/lithic scatters that cannot be found but through intensive pedestrian survey. There are two more possibilities that if taken into consideration, we may expect to find more Neolithic sites in the plain. The first is the problem of surface visibility. It is quite possible that at some sites later periods covered the underlying Neolithic deposits, or the frequency of Neolithic surface materials was not enough to be recognized by surveyors. The second issue is quite possible in similar dynamic alluvial plains, i.e., aggradation of the plain and subsequent burying of the sites (see also Ghamari Fatideh *et al.* 2015). While there may be no immediate solution for the second, the first would be ameliorated by conducting intensive surface survey. Moreover, numerous valleys of the northern flank of Alborz Mountains overlooking the plain should have contemporary sites as suggested by some accidentally discovered sites like Tappeh Chino (Nokandeh 2012) and Tappeh Latteh (Azarnoush & Helwing 2005: 199-200; see also Abbasi 2011, Map 5). Behshahr area, as western continuation of the Gorgan plain, can be considered as one of the areas likely to have close ties with the Neolithic Chakhmaq/Jeitun culture, as indicated by few neolithic sherds from Tough Tappeh (see above). It should be pointed out that the westernmost Neolithic site of the Gorgan plain is just 40 km east of Behshahr (see also Abbasi 2011, Map 5).

Problem of aceramic Neolithic occupations preceding classic Chakhmaq/Jeitun sites has always been considered by scholars as an important issue to address in the process of neolithisation in this part of the Iranian Plateau (e.g. Kohl 1984: 55). So far, the only certain site with aceramic component in the region is the west mound of Sang-e Chakhmaq,<sup>11</sup> excavated in 1970s

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<sup>11</sup> As noted above, Kheir Abad 2, in the Shahroud plain, could be ascribed to the aceramic Neolithic as well (see Roustaei 2012: 199).

by Masuda (1984) and sounded by the author in 2009 (Roustaei 2009a; Roustaei *et al.* 2015). The west mound with its elaborate architecture (e.g. Masuda *et al.* 2013: 216, Figs. 14.4, 14.5) indicates that there would be still an earlier phase of the settled life with, presumably, solid architecture in northeastern Iranian Plateau. Considering that the west mound of Sang-e Chakhmaq represents the earliest known alleged permanently settled village with solid architecture in the region, for the time being it is the sole candidate for the early stage of the Chakhmaq/Jeitun Neolithic. Nevertheless, one may take into consideration the significant potential of the recently recognized sites in Gorgan plain to address this issue. It is highly probable that one or more of these sites have aceramic component at their basal levels or there may be such sites in never-surveyed-foothills to the south and east of the plain.

On the basis of the available data (e.g. Malek Shahmirzadi & Nokandeh 2000; Rezvani 2006; Roustaei 2012; Yousefi Zoshk & Zeighami 2013), it is obvious that Shahroud area and Gorgan plain have had very close cultural ties during the Neolithic period, although their landscape and environment differs strikingly. Gorgan plain has numerous water resources in the shape of permanent and seasonal streams flowing down the Alborz Mountains. The whole foothills on the south and east to elevations higher than 1800 m asl is covered on most parts by dense forests. The Shahroud area, on the other hand, essentially consists of foothill plains with least surface water resources and a barren landscape. While the elevation of the Gorgan plain is less than 50 m asl in most parts, the Shahroud area lies at the mean elevation of some 1200-1300 m asl. The cultivable lands in Shahroud area are restricted to the distal end of large alluvial fans which characterize this landscape (see Roustaei 2012), whereas the whole lands south of the Gorgan River are under heavy cultivation, thanks to abundant water resources.

The Gorgan plain and Shahroud area, with such different landscapes, have been separated by the eastern extension of the Alborz Mountains, some 25-35 km in width, which host the highest peak in the northeast region, Shahvar (with an elevation of 3945 m asl). The communication between the northern and southern sides of the Alborz in this zone is, however, not a real challenge, because there are several mountain passes, less than 2200 m asl in elevation, which make the crossing possible (fig. 12). Nowadays, two of the passes have paved road that connect Shahroud to Gorgan. Here we show some linear distances between some of the discussed Neolithic sites in these sub-regions to provide a spatial impression;



Fig. 12. A satellite view along the Eastern Alborz Mountains between Bastam and Gorgan plains, showing some of the Neolithic sites on both sides of Alborz.

direct distance between Sang-e Chakhmaq in the Bastam plain and Tappeh Chino in southern forested valleys of the Gorgan plain, is about 38 km. This figure would be reduced to 28 km if we measure the distance between Siah Rigi, on the northern part of the Bastam plain, and Tappeh Chino (fig. 12). It is interesting to note that Tappeh Chino is located *en route* one of the tracks crossing the Alborz between Bastam and Gorgan plains which frequently use for hiking today.

The distribution pattern prevailed in northern Khorasan, with three (or perhaps five or six) known sites, witnesses a much dispersed placement of the Neolithic settlements than in the Shahroud area or Gorgan plain. Of these, as we mentioned earlier, Tappeh Qaleh Khan, Tappeh Pahlevan and Tappeh Armardlou are evidently in the sphere of Sang-e Chakhmaq/Jeitun culture, but Tappeh Baluch, considering its few published materials, should be tested by further excavations.<sup>12</sup> As there are not published materials available from Yarim Tappeh, Nowkhandan, Nowrouz Tappeh and DG 19 in Darreh Gaz plain, we are not confident to acknowledge them as Neo-

<sup>12</sup> In May 2014 the author visited Baluch, accompanying by O. Garazhian, the excavator of the site. We could find not a single sherd similar to the pottery from Sang-e Chakhmaq east mound.

lithic Chakhmaq/Jeitun sites.<sup>13</sup> Although northern Khorasan has been surveyed by several Iranian and foreign teams (e.g. Ricciardi 1980; Kohl & Heskell 1980; and those enumerated in Labbaf Khaniki 2012) no definite Neolithic site with comparable materials with those of Sang-e Chakhmaq east mound has been reported from its eastern parts.

There are two sites in the Kashaf Roud valley between Mashhad and Quchan, which according to colleagues (e.g. Garazhian, pers. comm.) have Neolithic material; these are Qareh Tappeh and Qias Abad (fig. 2). Not a single sherd from these sites has yet been published and during a visit in May 2014 the author could not find any sherd reminiscent of the Sang-e Chakhmaq east mound pottery on their surface.<sup>14</sup> Yet, it should be noted that from the technological point of view some sherds of these sites could be assigned to the Neolithic period. These sherds have a thick, light brown to orange burnished clay slip and are heavily chaff-tempered. It should be emphasized that Kashaf Roud valley, some 10-15 km in width, with its great ecological potentials, including water resources and fertile land, is one of the most promising parts of Khorasan in terms of prehistoric sites. This valley has never been surveyed intensively and what we know from its archaeological history is through cursory visits and extensive surveys (see, for example, Jamialahmadi *et al.* 2008).

On the basis of available data outlined above, it seems that what we acknowledge as Chakhmaq/Jeitun culture is predominate primarily in the western part of the northeast region, i.e., the Gorgan plain and the Shahroud area. The surface sherd collections from Gorgan plain are virtually

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<sup>13</sup> Kohl & Heskell (1980: 163) mentioned that the site designated as DG 19 in Darreh Gaz has sherds “reminiscent of the Djeitun materials”, but as they have not published any illustration of the sherds, it is hard to ascertain the presence of the Chakhmaq/Jeitun culture at this site.

<sup>14</sup> In May 2014 the author had a short trip in the northeastern Iran to visit the possible Neolithic sites and their surface materials and the landscape of this part of the country. We followed the route from Tehran to Shahroud, then through Sabzavar and Neyshabour plains to Mashhad. Then we turned NW along Kashaf Roud valley to Quchan, where we followed the northern route to Darreh Gaz through Allah-o Akbar ridge. Our trip, back to Quchan from Darreh Gaz, followed the way to Shirvan and Bojnourd along the natural corridor between Mashhad and Bojnourd, where we visited Qaleh Khan in vicinity of the small town of Ashkhaneh, and then we continued to reach Gonbad-e Kavous through Jangal-e Golestan forests. In addition to visiting several prehistoric sites *en route*, we spent two days to see a selection of the newly recognized sites in the Gorgan Plain and immediate upland valleys and terminated our trip by visiting Bahshahr area on SE corner of the Caspian Sea.

identical to those of Sang-e Chakhmaq east mound. The easternmost sites with indisputable Chakhmaq/Jeitun sherds are, so far, Tappeh Pahlevan in Jajarm plain and Qaleh Khan in Ashkhaneh plain, 130 and 200 km north-east of Sang-e Chakhmaq respectively. Therefore, it seems that the Chakhmaq/Jeitun culture could hardly reached Sabzevar on southern foothills of the Alborz Mountains and Quchan in upper reach of the Atrak valley. In fact, if we draw a hypothetical N-S line across the Alborz Mountains from Bojnourd in the north to Sabzevar in the south, then, no documented evidence of even a single site with materials similar to those of Sang-e Chakhmaq east mound has been reported eastward. Thus, based upon available data it is likely that in the northeast region we are facing with at least two cultural zones during the Neolithic period, one in the western part, well represented by Sang-e Chakhmaq east mound as the type-site, and the other in the eastern part, in Sabzevar and Neyshabour plains and Kashaf Roud Valley and perhaps farther east, represented by plain, thick-slipped brown/orange, chaff-tempered ware that discovered on the sites of these areas. Only further detailed fieldwork, aiming to locate the possible Neolithic sites of the eastern/northeastern Khorasan and subsequent stratified materials and absolute dating can confirm or refute this proposition.

A further note worth mentioning is the large and different landscapes that the Chakhmaq/Jeitun culture had occupied. From the lowland plain of Gorgan to intermontane plains of northern Khorasan to northern piedmonts of the Kopet Dagh and to southern foothill plains of Eastern Alborz Mountains, the known sites of this culture occupy a terrain more than 600 km from west to east and about 400 km from south to north. Such a vast terrain encompasses diverse landscapes from several viewpoints. For instance, while Gorgan plain benefits from good amount of precipitation, intermontane plains and valleys of northern Khorasan receive rather moderate rainfall, but northern piedmonts of the Kopet Dagh and southern foothills of Eastern Alborz Mountains suffer from low precipitation. Consequently, vegetation differ considerably between these areas, as some of the corresponding animal and plant species. From the altitude point of view there are considerable differences between these sub-regions as well. While nearly every Gorgan plain sites is located at an altitude below 100 m asl,<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> As the level of the Caspian Sea is some 28 m below the mean sea level, some of the sites in the Gorgan Plain are in fact at elevations below the sea level.



the Shahroud sites are at 1200-1400 m asl, and the sites of southern Turkmenistan are all located at elevations below 500 m asl. In this way, the highest known site of the Chakhmaq/Jeitun culture to date is Siah Rigi, in north of the Bastam plain, at 1432 m asl. Such a diverse landscapes occupied by people of Chakhmaq/Jeitun culture, imply different adaptations which would have been in action in these different ecological niches.

## Conclusion

So far, at least 60 certain Neolithic sites, represented by material reminiscent to the east mound of Sang-e Chakhmaq, have been identified in northeastern Iran: 50 sites in Gorgan plain, 6 sites in Shahroud area, 3 sites in western parts of northern Khorasan and one site in Behshahr Area (Table 2). Considering two partially aceramic sites of Sang-e Chakhmaq west mound and (possibly) Kheir Abad 2, both in the Shahroud area, the total Neolithic sites of the region rise to 62. The current settlement distribution of Neolithic sites in the northeast region (fig. 2) is based on non-intensive archaeological surveys, then likely to change by pedestrian, intensive surveys in the future.

In this review, I tried to outline the available information on the Neolithic period of the northeastern Iranian Plateau. Based on our current understanding, the Neolithic of the region has close ties with Jeitun culture in southern Turkmenistan, much the same as two sides of the same coin. For decades the Kopet Dagh foothills played the main role to approach possible explanations for the emergence of early village life in this “frontier” zone of the ancient Near East. Despite extensive surveys of the foothills and excavations of most sites of Jeitun culture, it seems that Kopet Dagh cannot yield further clues on the early stages of the culture. In contrast, the northeast region of Iran, with such a wealth of unexplored sites, is going to open promising opportunities to accomplish the issue. As discussed above, two areas of Shahroud and Gorgan plain are crucial in addressing the formative stages of Chakhmaq/Jeitun culture. It is highly probable that Gorgan plain play the major role on this subject in the future.



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## **KHAJE ASKAR: A 4TH MILLENNIUM BC CEMETERY IN BAM, SOUTHEASTERN IRAN**

BY

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**Abstract:** Due to the exciting discovery of major Bronze Age urban centers in southeastern Iran, such as Shahr e Soukhte, Shahdad and Konar Sandal (Jiroft), most scholarly attention has been given to the 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium BC. As a result, the cultures preceding the Bronze Age in particular the 4<sup>th</sup> millennium BC have been often neglected. In early 2011, the Iranian Center of Heritage and Tourism Organization (ICHTO) of Kerman Province conducted a rescue excavation at Khaje Askar near the city of Bam, in which several graves and complete funerary vessels were discovered (about 15 graves had been bulldozed previously). As a result of the excavations, a total of 9 graves and 53 funerary goods were uncovered; the burial goods included ceramics, stone and clay beads, stone vessels, clay objects, shells and a unique metal blade. In this article, we state the results of excavations at Khaje Askar cemetery and describe the burials and funerary goods and according to a comparative analysis based on the ceramics of other excavated settlement sites of southeastern Iran and Pakistan such as Tal- e Iblis, Mahtoutabad, Mehr-garh and Shahi Tump, we argue that Khaje Askar cemetery belongs to the Aliabad culture (Iblis IV) and dates to the 4<sup>th</sup> millennium BC.

**Keywords:** Southeastern Iran, Khaje Askar cemetery, burial patterns, Aliabad culture (Iblis IV)

### **Introduction**

The village of Khaje Askar is located 5km west of Bam city in Kerman province and 300m south of the Kerman - Bam Road (fig. 1). In 2011, during construction activities in this region, a prehistoric cemetery was accidentally found. Khaje Askar cemetery is located on the east bank of Chelleh Khane River in the Bam plain. From the construction activities, 15 complete vessels and some bone fragments were found which proved the existence of a cemetery, so the construction activities were postponed and a rescue excavation was conducted by a team of archaeologists from





Fig. 1. Google earth Map showing the location of Khaje Askar cemetery in the west of Bam.

ICHTO of Kerman. The rescue excavation lasted for 1 month and 7 experts and 15 workers helped us during the fieldwork. The objectives of rescue excavations at Khaje Askar were to identify any intact graves and to liberate the parts of natural hill on which the cemetery was located. According to the landlords, during the construction activities about 15 graves had been bulldozed in the west side of the natural hill. All graves found through excavations were on the eastern part of the hill. The interesting point is that no graves were discovered in the southern part of the hill. There are many 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium BC excavated cemeteries in southeastern Iran, such as Shahr-e Soukhte (Piperno and Tosi 1975, Sajjadi *et. al.* 2003), Shahdad (Hakemi 1997), Mahtoutabad (Madjidzadeh 2008), Konaro (Rahbar 1376/1997), Khurab (Stein 1937), and Rameshk (Choobak H.: “Cultural Sequence of Jazmurian, The Islamic City of Jiroft”, Unpublished PhD, Tarbiat Modares University, Iran, 1383/2004), Damin (Tosi 1970), Khinaman (Curtis 1988), Espidezh and Chagerdak excavations recently led by M. Heydari (Heydari 1384/2005, 1384/2007: Unpublished ICHTO reports on rescue excavations at Espidezh and Chagerdak cemeteries), which prove the use of cemeteries was frequent in this period and give us some information about the burial patterns. In contrast, Khaje Askar is the first cemetery belonging to 4<sup>th</sup> millennium BC to have been found in southeastern



Iran. This suggests that the culture of using cemeteries dates back at least to the 4<sup>th</sup> millennium BC in this region.

Tal-i Iblis (period IV), Mahtoutabad and Yahya (period VA) are the key sites of 4<sup>th</sup> millennium BC cultures of southeastern Iran. In Tal-I Iblis, period IV or Aliabad culture represents the 4<sup>th</sup> millennium BC culture. The pottery of Iblis IV comprises Aliabad plain, Aliabad painted, Aliabad bichrome, Aliabad brushed and Aliabad ridged (Caldwell 1967: 182-88, figs. 21-28). Aliabad pottery is handmade as in preceding periods. The color of the paste is generally pinkish brown and buff color in surface. There are some indications of a transition from Iblis III to Iblis IV and layers of "Early Aliabad" contained both Dashkar and Aliabad sherds suggesting a true ceramic transition between the two periods (Caldwell 1967: 180, Pl. 8). The suggested dating based on C<sup>14</sup> for Early Aliabad is the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter of 4<sup>th</sup> millennium BC, although we don't know how far the old Iblis datings are reliable.

### **Excavations at Khaje Askar cemetery and the graves**

The cemetery of Khaje Askar was accidentally discovered and a rescue excavation was conducted by a team of archaeologists under the supervision of Soleimani in 2011 (A. Soleimani 2011: unpublished report prepared for ICHTO). The cemetery is located on a natural hill of one hectare. There was a modern workshop on the north part of the hill and its western part was bulldozed by the construction activities. Thus, the east and south parts of the hill were the only areas left intact and excavations were carried out in these areas (figs. 2, 3). In addition to the damage caused by construction activities, the existence of a modern channel (70 cm wide and 1 m deep) through the eastern part of the hill had caused significant damage to the cemetery, especially grave 105 which was barely recognizable. In Khaje Askar cemetery, 7 trenches named A-G were opened covering 460 square meters of the hill. Nine graves were uncovered from the trenches on the eastern part of the hill. They were labelled from 101 to 109. In the following section, we describe the burials and funerary goods.

### **Grave 101**

This grave is located in the eastern part of the hill and in trench A. The tomb structure is a simple pit. The body is placed on its back cross-legged.

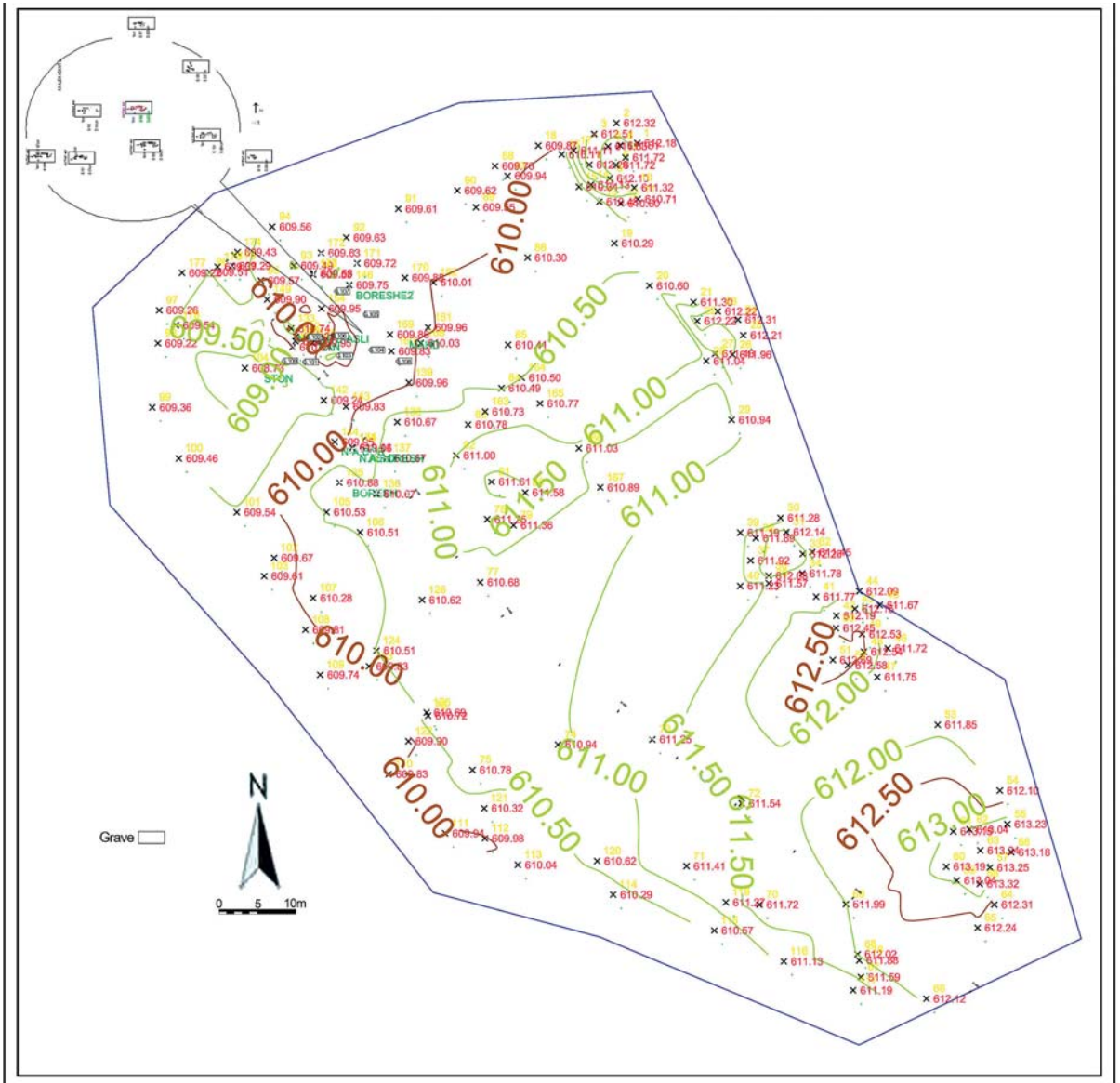


Fig. 2. Topographic map showing the location of the graves.



Fig. 3. General view of the Khaje Askar cemetery, from South.

The orientation is approximately west-east with the head to the west and the skeleton dimension is 60 x 100 cm (fig. 4). There are 7 burial goods in this grave including 4 objects near the head and 2 near the skeleton's waist, while the last one is too deteriorated. The soil used in the pit differed from the surrounding soil; it seems after putting the body in the hole, it was filled with a sandy soil; this tradition can be identified in the other burials. All the burial goods included conical goblets, the diagnostic ceramic of the Aliabad culture. Six of them were simple and one of them was painted. The painted ceramic was decorated with an oblique chain which started from the rim and covers the mid-sections. The burial goods had been disturbed by the sediments. It should be mentioned that no identification of the bones was done by a physical anthropologist; however, the big size of the bones suggests strongly that they belonged to a man.

### Grave 102

This grave is located in the eastern part of the hill and in trench A, 235 cm east of grave 101. It was partly disturbed by a channel; but from the intact part we could identify the burial structure and the location of grave goods. The tomb structure is a simple pit. The body is placed on its right



Fig. 4. Skeleton and the position of burial goods in grave 101.

side. The orientation is approximately west-east with the head to the west and the skeleton dimension is 110x140 cm (fig. 5). The soil used in the pit differed from the surrounding soil; it seems after putting the body in the hole, it was filled with a different soil. Eight grave goods were found including 6 pottery vessels, one stone bowl and a clay object. The pottery was all located near the head on the east side of the body and the 2 remaining objects (clay and stone objects) were found near the legs. Three of the pottery ceramic vessels were plain and the others were decorated. Typologically, 5 ceramics were goblets of the Aliabad culture while another was a painted jar with checkered motifs.

### Grave 103

This grave is located in the east side of graves 101 and 102 in trench A (fig. 6). A simple pit burial could be identified. The body was deposited





Fig. 5. Skeleton with burial goods in grave 102.

in a crouched position, lying on its right side. All parts of body except the skull was disturbed by flood layers and the body could not be removed. Not only the body but also the burial goods, including 5 ceramic vessels and a shell, were disturbed. All objects were situated near the legs of the skeleton. In the shell traces of red ocher were still visible. Some would consider ocher as a cosmetic, but both men and women used cosmetics in ancient times.

### Grave 104

This grave is situated east of graves 101-103. A simple pit burial could be identified. The body was deposited in a crouched position, lying on its right side. The body dimension was about 60x125 cm suggesting it probably belonged to an adult (fig. 7). The burial goods included pottery and a metal object. All the pottery is mostly deteriorated by the environmental factors; however, from the remaining rims we could identify that they were bowls and goblets. Three of the ceramics were plain and the others were decorated. In addition to the pottery, a unique copper-alloy arrow-



Fig. 6. Position of grave goods on grave 103, *in situ*.





Fig. 7. Skeleton in the grave 104.

head (?) was also found. The burial is badly deteriorated, which makes it impossible to recognize the sex of it, but the arrowhead may suggest the body belonged to a man.

### Grave 105

Grave 105 is located in trench D to the northern part of trench A. Unfortunately, the burial was completely destroyed because of a water channel, but we were able to uncover some fragmentary pottery and bones which proved the existence of a burial there.

### Grave 106

This burial, as the others, is located in the eastern part of the hill. The tomb structure is a simple pit and the burial is oriented west-east (head to the west). The body was deposited in a crouched position (fig. 8). This burial was covered by plaster of straw and clay. The burial contained 5 funerary goods: 3 pottery vessels, a clay object and a shell. Pottery vessels were situated near the head, the clay object behind the skull and the shell near the shoulder. Two of the pottery vessels were conical goblets, one of



Fig. 8. Skeleton and the position of burial goods in grave 106.

them was painted and the other was plain. The last pottery vessel is a bichrome flagon (black and brown) matching well the bichrome pottery of Tal-i Iblis (Aliabad bichrome ware). The shell, like the shell of grave 103, contained ocher.

### Grave 107

Grave 107 is situated in the northern part of trench D. Roots had caused a lot of damage in this burial, but the burial pattern was still recognizable. The body was deposited in a crouched position, lying on its right side. The orientation is approximately west-east with the head to the west. The skeleton was only 40cm long; probably this body belonged to a child (fig. 9). In this burial no grave goods were found, which may suggest that children



Fig. 9. Skeleton in grave 107.



in Khaje Askar cemetery were buried without funerary gifts. The tomb structure is a simple pit that indicates there is no difference between the tomb structure of a child and that of an adult in this cemetery.

### Grave 108

This grave is the easternmost burial of the cemetery. Situated in the east part of trench A, the burial had been disturbed because of moisture and other environmental factors (fig. 10). From the remaining bones we could identify the position of the body; its orientation is west-east with the head to the west. The body was deposited in a crouched position, lying on its right side. 9 burial goods were found including 7 pottery vessels and 2 stone bowls. All of the pottery vessels were footed goblets placed inside each other. One of them was decorated with a checkered motif and the others were all plain.



Fig. 10. burial goods in grave 108.

### Grave 109

This grave is located in trench F to the west side of trench A. The body was deposited in a crouched position, lying on its right side. The body orientation is west-east with the head to the west (fig. 11). 11 burial goods were uncovered and most of them were placed near the head. The funerary goods of this grave were more than those of the other graves and the richness and types of the materials found in this burial, suggest the existence of social ranking in the cemetery. Grave goods included a marble bead found near the leg, 1 marble bowl, 2 clay bowls with traces of ocher and 6 pottery vessels including 4 goblets, a painted spout with the triangle and chain motifs and a bowl decorated with wave patterns.



Fig. 11. Skeleton and the position of burial goods in grave 109.

## Burial goods of Khaje Askar cemetery

### *Pottery*

The pottery assemblage of Khaje Askar consisted of 53 vessels (figs. 12-18); 39 of them were discovered during excavations and the rest were found during construction activities (fig. 19). Our ceramic classification is based on the shape; including: long and short footed goblets (which are the most abundant form in this cemetery), bowls, jars and a flagon. The ceramic assemblage of the cemetery could be classified into 3 general groups: plain, monochrome and bichrome. Their paste is mostly pink and some of them have buff slip. The decorations of the monochrome pottery were done by black color while in the bichromes, both black and brown were used. In some pottery vessels, both the outer and inner surfaces were painted. Footed goblets, which are the most frequent finds in Khaje Askar cemetery, are the diagnostic ceramics of Iblis IV. They are found from 4<sup>th</sup> millennium sites in a vast geographical area from Pakistan to Kerman province. The parallels for this type of vessels of Iblis IV could be identified from Bardsir valley (Sarraf 1981, Caldwell 1967), Mahtoutabad I, II (Vidale & Desset 2013), Shahi Tump II and IIIA and Mehrgarh (Mutin 2013) in Pakistan. According to the given chronology of these sites, these ceramics were used in the middle 4<sup>th</sup> millennium BC (2nd and 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter of 4<sup>th</sup> millennium BC). Aliabad bichromes have also been found in Khaje Askar cemetery (fig. 20). The decorations of this type were done by black and red or black and brown colors. The common motifs of Khaje Askar's pottery assemblage are concentric circles, wave patterns, filled and hollow diamonds and chains, all of which match with those suggested by Caldwell for the ceramic assemblage of Iblis IV.

### *Clay objects*

In total, 5 clay objects were discovered from Khaje Askar cemetery (fig. 21). 4 out of 5 clay objects were found during the excavations including a round clay object from grave 102, 2 clay bowls from grave 109 and a clay bead from grave 106. One spouted bowl was discovered during the construction activities.



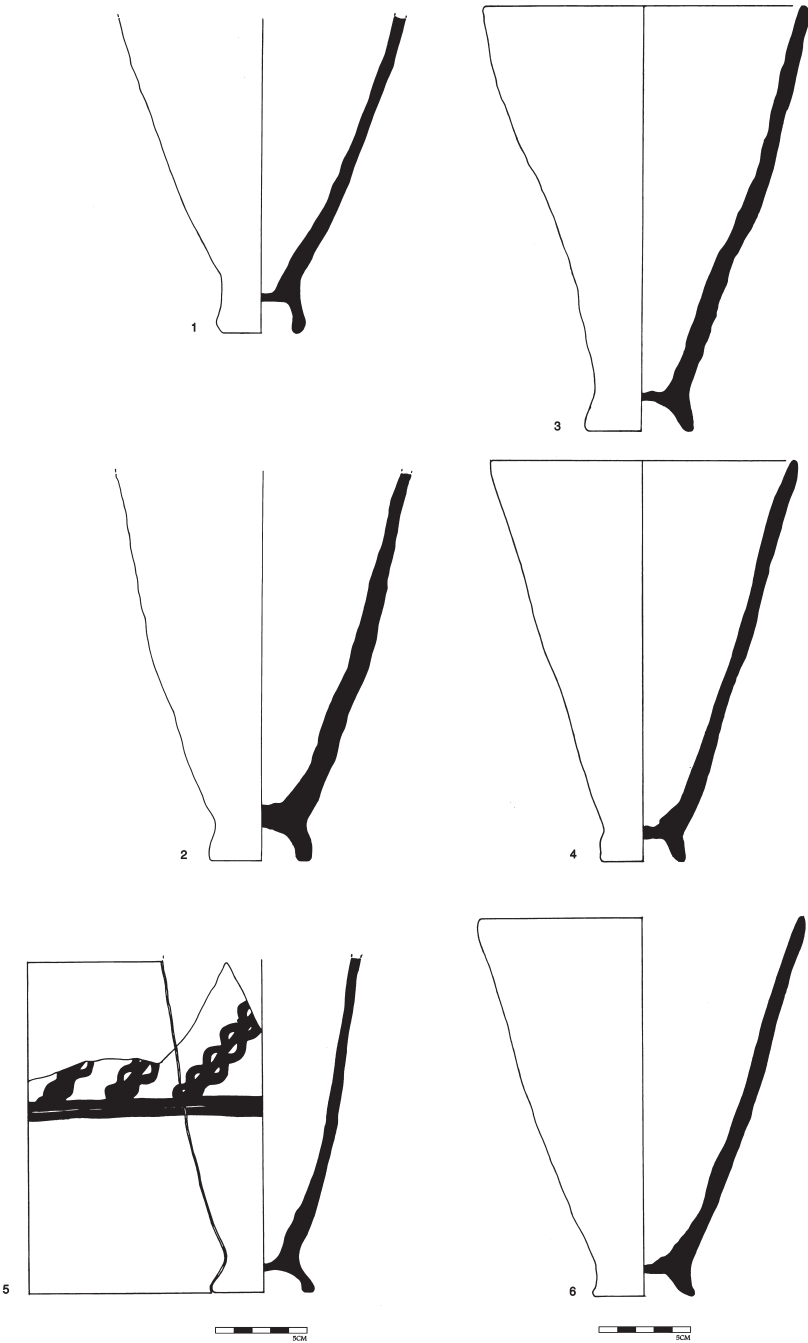


Fig. 12. Grave 101 ceramic drawings.

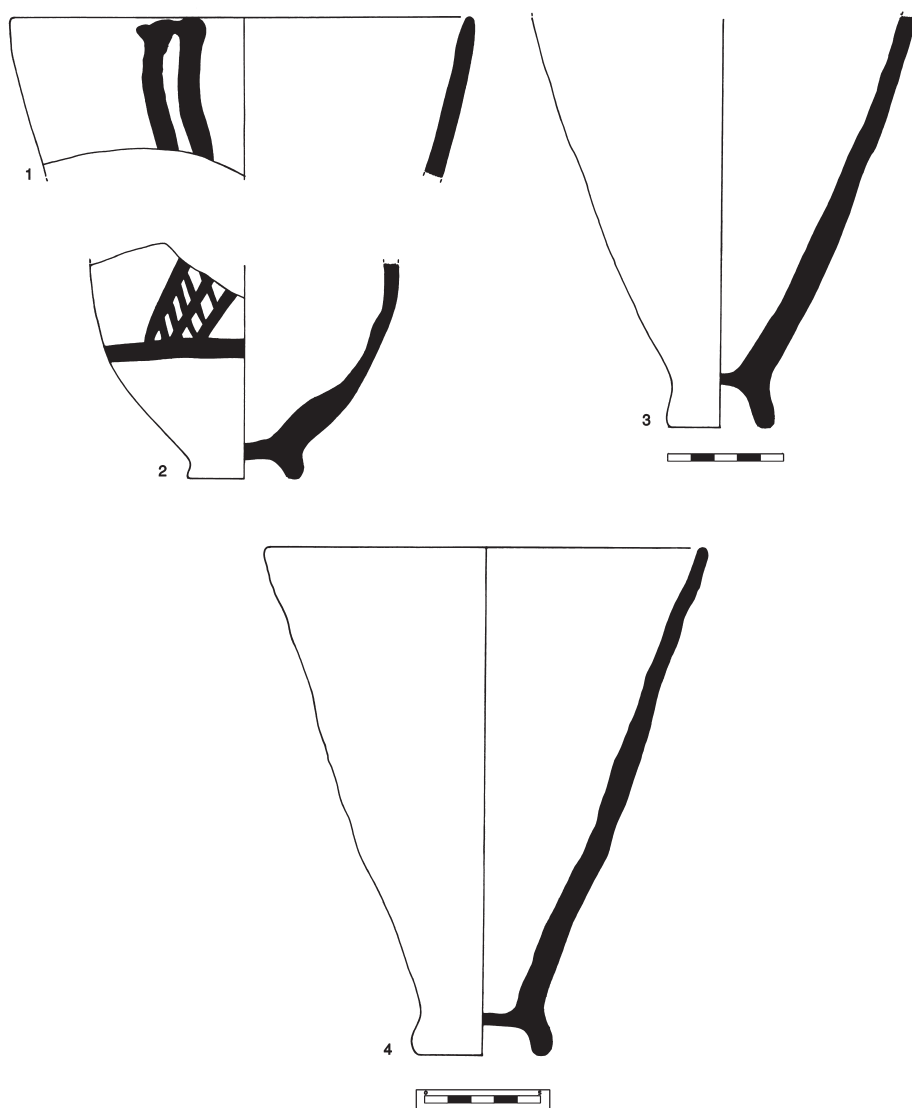


Fig. 13. Grave 102 ceramic drawings.

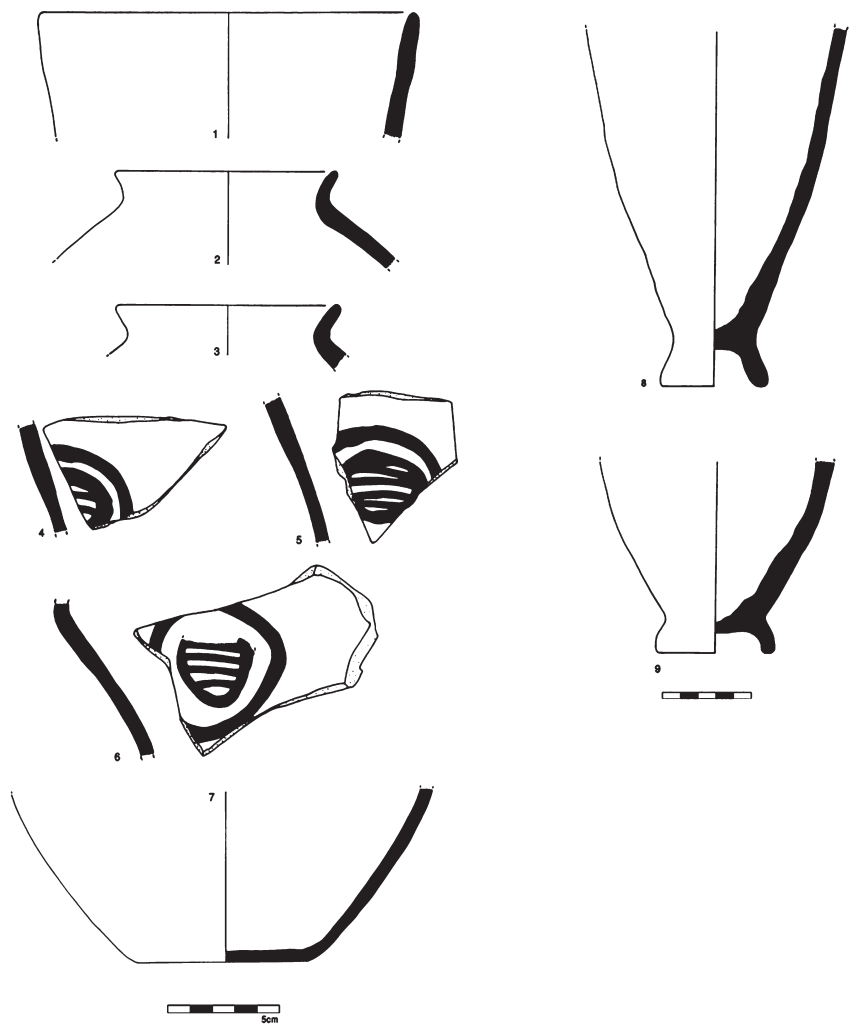


Fig. 14. Grave 103 ceramic drawings.

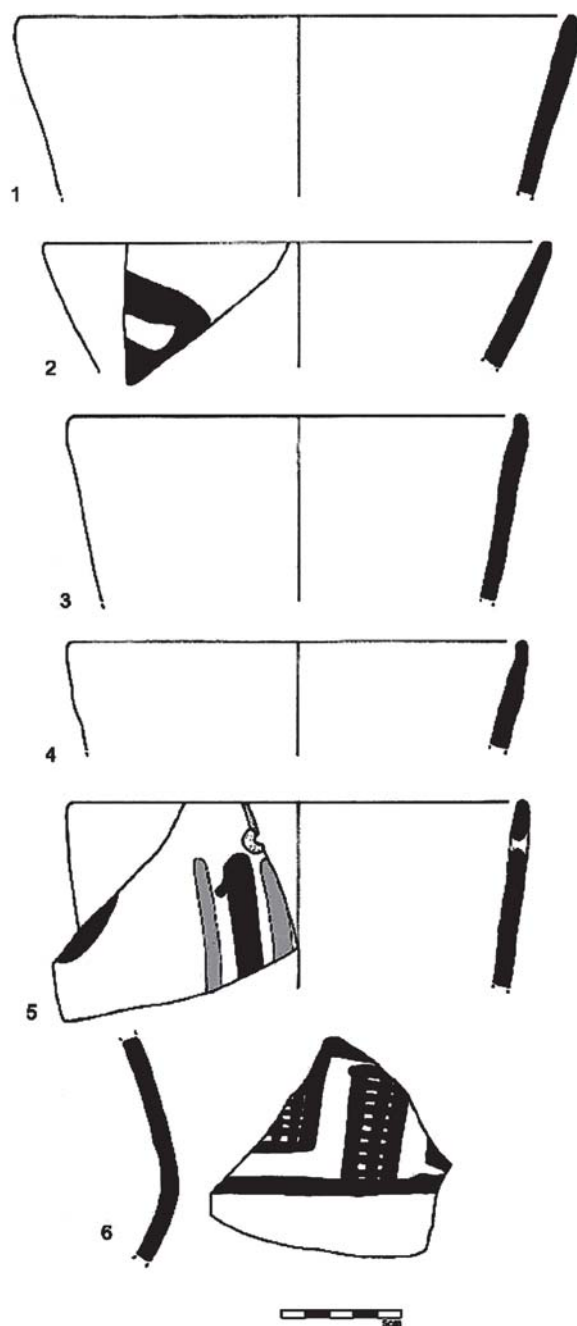


Fig. 15. Grave 104 ceramic drawings.

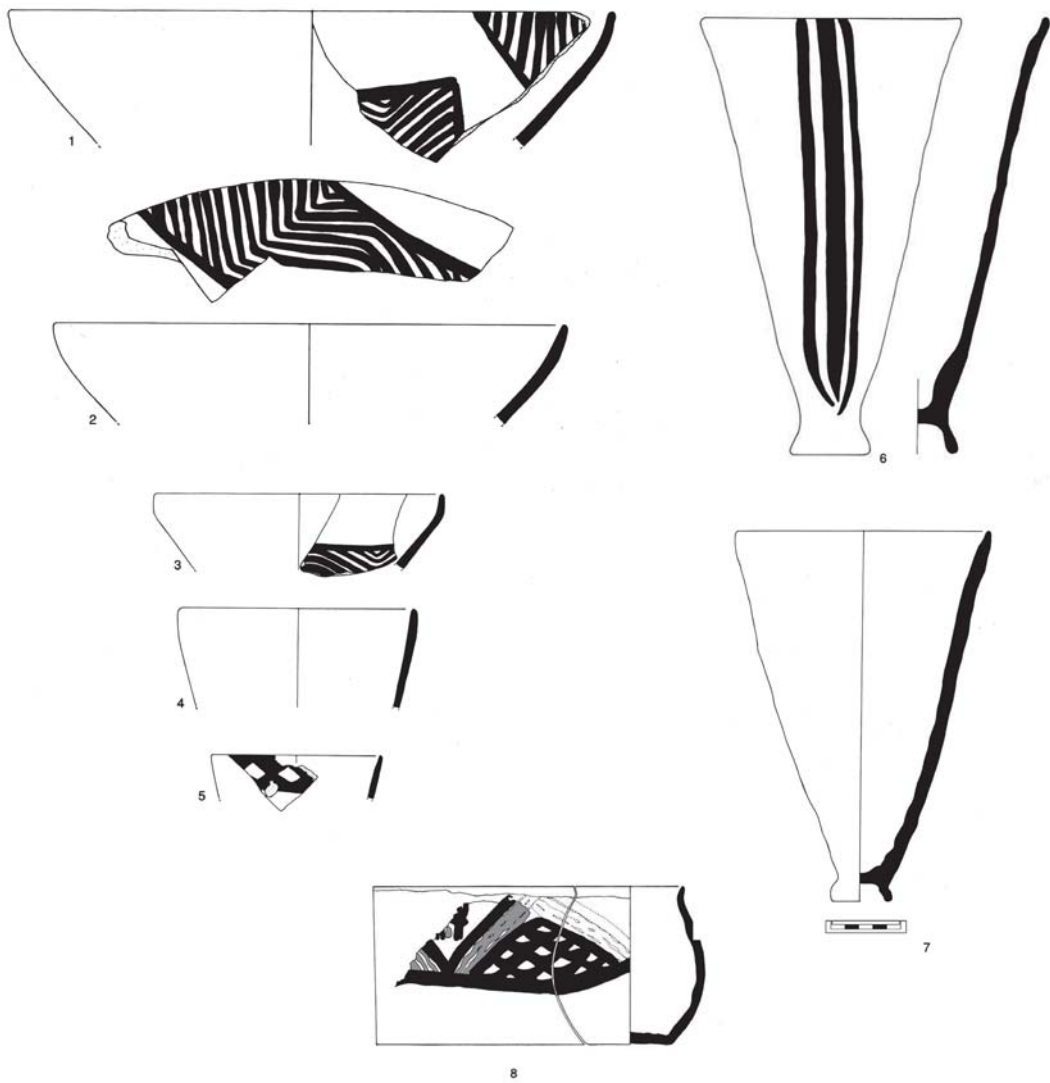


Fig. 16. grave 106 ceramic drawings.

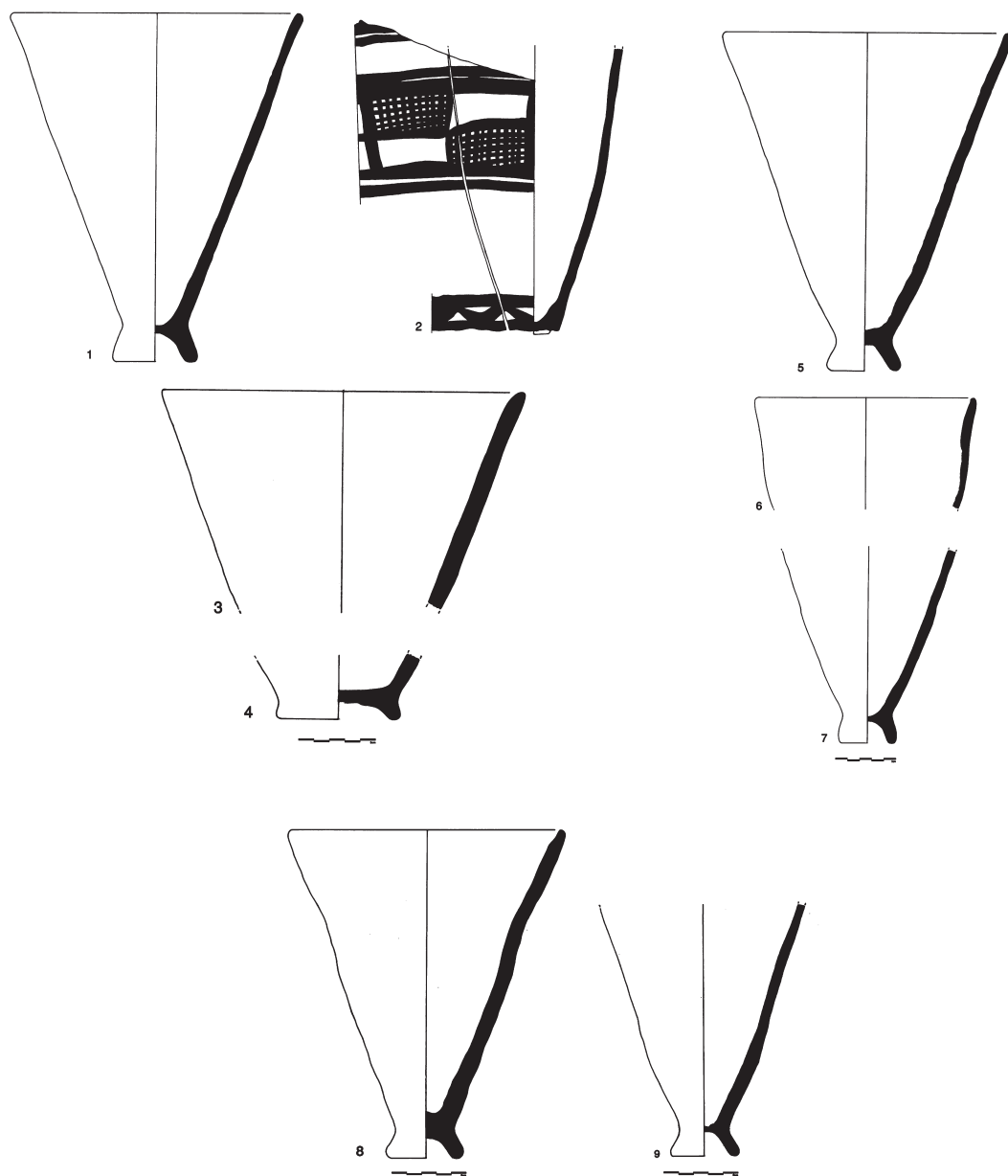


Fig. 17. grave 108 ceramic drawings.



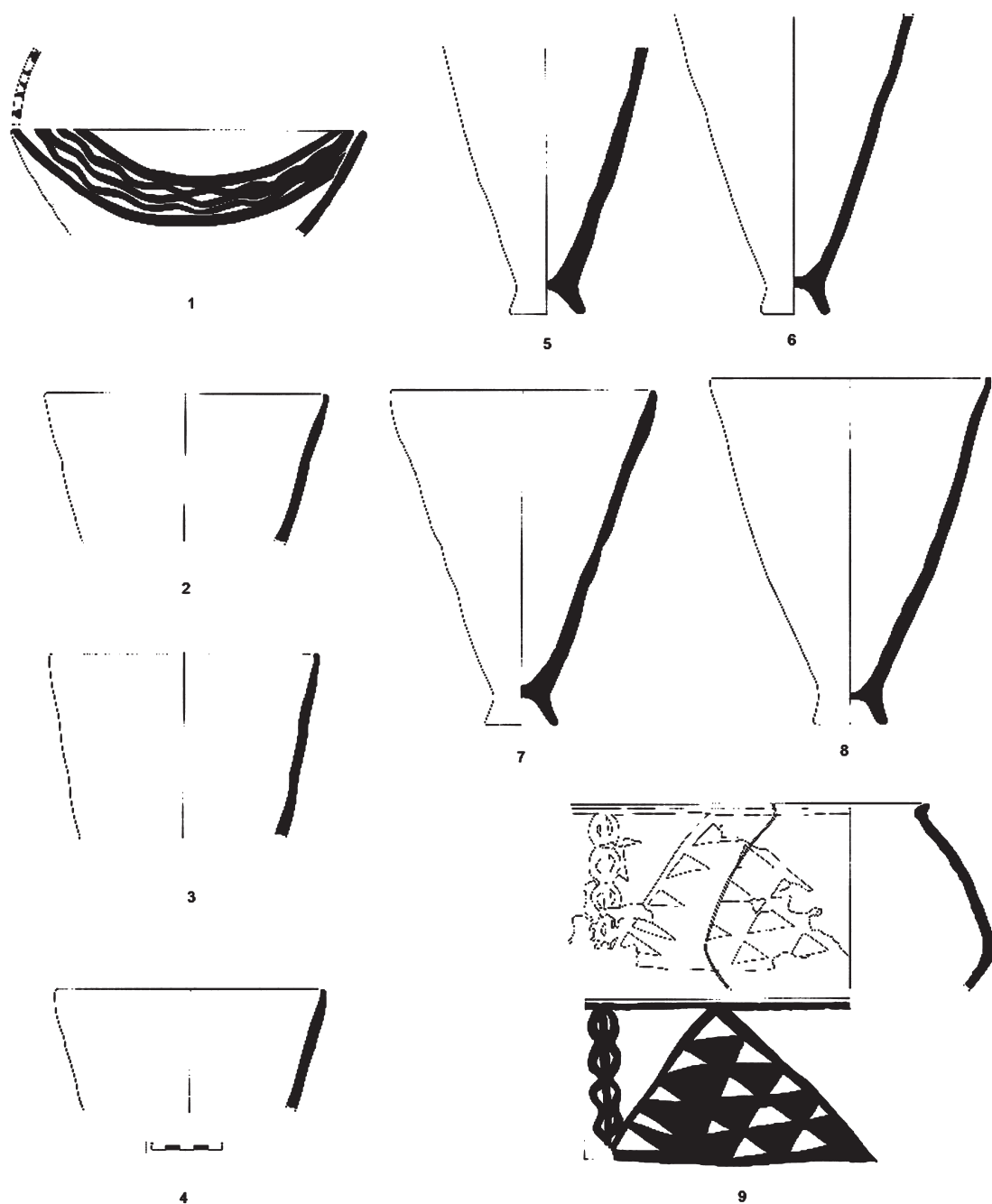


Fig. 18. grave 109 ceramic drawings.



Fig 19. Ceramic vessels from the destruction of the western part of Khaje Askar cemetery.



Fig 20. Selection of ceramic grave goods of Khaje Askar cemetery (from graves 101, n. 1-4), 102 (n. 5, 6), 106 (n. 7-9), 108 (n. 10-13) and 109 (n. 14-17).

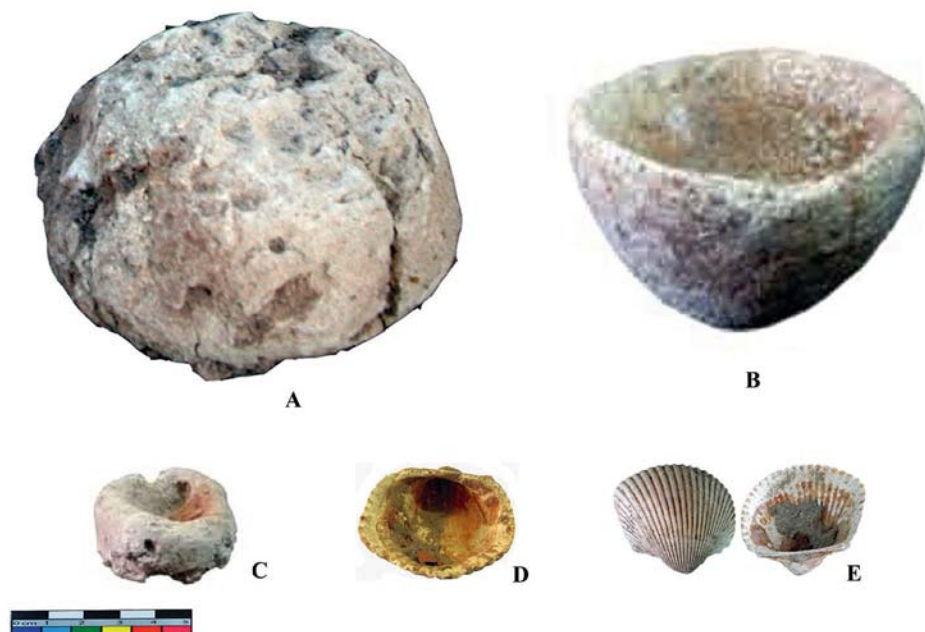


Fig. 21. Clay objects and shells from Khaje Askar cemetery.

### *Shells*

There are 2 shells belonging to the genus *Cardo*, between the grave goods that were found in burials 103 and 109 (fig. 21). Both of them were filled with red ocher, which could be considered as cosmetics.

### *Stone objects*

Overall 5 stone objects have been found in the Khaje Askar cemetery (fig. 22), including four bowls and one bead. From the 4 bowls, 2 of them were discovered from grave 108 and the other 2 bowls were found from graves 102 and 109. The stone bead which was uncovered from grave 109 was rectangular shaped and was made of marble.

### *Metal objects*

Only one metal object was found from the cemetery. It is a 10cm long blade discovered from grave 104 (fig. 22). Interdisciplinary analysis are needed to identify the composition of this object but the fact that the

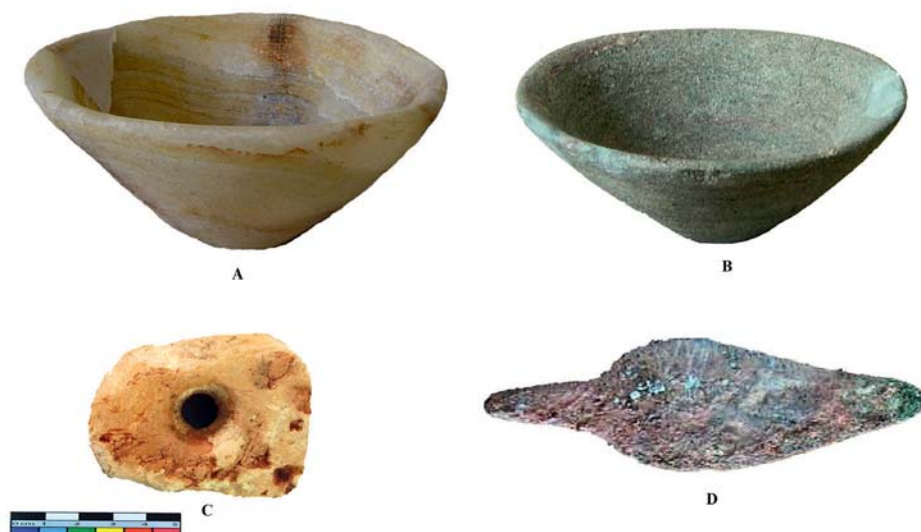


Fig. 22. Stone and metal objects from Khaje Askar cemetery.

cemetery dates back to 4<sup>th</sup> millennium BC, makes it more logical to believe this object is made of Cu-As alloy or pure copper (Thornton 2009).

#### Iblis IV and Khaje Askar cemetery

Aliabad ceramics are found in a wide geographical range from Kerman province to Pakistan. They are discovered from sites in southeastern Iran such as Bardsir valley (Sajjadi 1987, Caldwell 1967), Shahdad (Salvatori & Vidale 1982, Hakemi 1977), Halil Rud valley (Madjidzadeh 2008, Vidale & Desset 2013) and Baluchestan of Iran (Stein 1937). In Makran, the best comparative materials for *Aliabad ware* are conical goblets that are mostly represented from Period IIIa of Shahi Tump, although the connections between some vases of *Miri ware* of Period II and some types of *Aliabad ware* need more investigation (Mutin 2013). Furthermore, the conical goblets appeared by the middle of the fourth millennium BC in eastern Pakistani Baluchestan (Mehrgarh IV: 3600-3400 BC, Fig. 11 n° 11) (Mutin 2013). In the Soghun valley only Yahya VA represents 4<sup>th</sup> millennium BC cultures. Its pottery assemblage includes handmade painted ceramics with black geometric motifs on red surface. Aliabad pottery was

not discovered from this site, the excavators of Tepe Yahya believe that the interruption between the end of Yahya VA and IVC is simultaneous with Iblis IV (Beale 1986:86). Iblis IV cultural materials are found from the lower layers of southern Konar Sandal (Madjidzadeh 2008) and Mahtoutabad (period I, II) in Halil Rud valley which date back to the first half of 4<sup>th</sup> millennium BC (Vidale & Desset 2013). According to the comparative chronology based on the ceramics of the excavated settlement sites of southeastern Iran and Pakistan and ceramics of Khaje Askar (painted, bichrome and plain wares), Khaje Askar cemetery belongs to the Aliabad culture (Iblis IV) and dates back to the 4<sup>th</sup> millennium BC. The fact that Khaje Askar cemetery belongs to the 4<sup>th</sup> millennium BC is very important not only because it proves that the use of cemeteries in south-eastern Iran goes back to 4<sup>th</sup> millennium BC, but it also shows the necessity of doing further studies on Aliabad culture in prehistoric archaeology of Iranian plateau.

## **Conclusion**

Khaje Askar is the earliest excavated cemetery of the region that has been found so far, which indicates that the use of cemeteries started before 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium BC in southeastern Iran and became frequent in the Bronze Age. The nearest Iblis IV settlement to Khaje Askar is the settlement site of Beidaran, located 4 km west of the cemetery. Future excavations at Beidaran are needed to establish whether the settlement and the Khaje Askar cemetery are related. Furthermore, the material from Khaje Askar requires further analysis, most especially of the bones in order to ascertain age, sex, disease, etc. The materials from this salvage excavation are currently stored at ICHTO of Kerman and we hope that future scholars will pursue their study.

## **Acknowledgments**

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## A PRELIMINARY REPORT ON THE FIRST SEASON OF EXCAVATION AT JAYRAN TEPE IN THE PLAIN OF ESFARAYEN, NORTHEASTERN IRAN, 2012

BY

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**Abstract:** The Iron Age in Northeastern Iran is one of the least understood periods of Iranian archaeology. Recent archaeological excavations in early Iron Age sites and systematic surveys in Northern Khorasan have made it possible to draw a sketch of the development of the Early Iron Age cultures in northeastern Iran. These fieldworks show that during the Early Iron Age two contemporary but different cultures were present in Northern Khorasan: Yaz depe I culture (ca. 15<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> BC), characterized by the presence of handmade painted pottery, and the culture of the Archaic Dahistan (approximately 14/13<sup>th</sup> –6<sup>th</sup> BC) with its Grey Ware, that is the direct continuation of the Gorgan – Hissar culture. In this paper I have briefly discussed results of the recent excavations at the early Iron Age site of Jayran Tepe and conclude that in the late second and early first millennium BC this part of Northeastern Iran was engaged in close cultural interactions both with the Gorgan and Misrian plain (ancient Dehistan), the plain of Damghan, as well as the lowlands of Murghab delta (Margiana).

**Keywords:** Iron Age, Handmade Painted Pottery, Yaz Culture, Archaic Dehistan, artificial platform, Esfarayen, Khorasan, Northeastern Iran

### Introduction

The province of Khorasan in northeastern Iran is one of the least understood areas of Iranian archaeology. Before the Iranian Revolution of 1979, only a limited amount of fieldwork was conducted in Khorasan province, which can be summarized as follows: the large-scale excavations of the Metropolitan Museum of Art at the medieval site of Nishapur and small test excavations at the prehistoric site of ‘Nishapur-P’ in 1930s (Hiebert and Dyson 2002); the survey of northern Khorasan region by E. O. Negahban from Tehran University in 1966 (Negahban, unpublished report); excavations by S. Kambakhshfard on behalf of the former Ministry of Culture and Art; a second expedition to the medieval site of Nishapur in 1968

(Kambakhshfard 1970); the survey of eastern Khorasan by a German team (Gropp 1995); the survey of the Atrak Valley and limited soundings by the Italian team of the Turin University (Venco Ricciardi 1980); and finally, the survey of the Darreh-Gaz plain by an American team (Kohl & Heskell 1980; Kohl et al. 1982).

After the Revolution, a considerable number of survey and excavation projects have been conducted in various parts of Khorasan often by the Iranian teams, much of which has unfortunately still remained unpublished.<sup>1</sup> With very few exceptions, such as the Sasanian site of Bandiyan in Darreh-Gaz, which has been systematically excavated since 1995, most of the excavation projects in this period have been concentrated on Islamic sites. Even these excavations have not usually been continuous, and systematic excavations have only been carried out in rare examples (e.g. Nishapur/Shadyakh, Tus). This considerable lack of fieldwork at prehistoric sites and the subsequent dearth of publications on this topic have caused a deficiency in our knowledge of the prehistoric period in Khorasan.<sup>2</sup>

Over the past six or seven years, however, a number of important survey and excavation projects have been launched in different parts of Khorasan either by the Iranian or joint international teams which have produced new insights into the cultural sequence of Khorasan province (e.g. Vahdati 2010; Vahdati & Francfort 1389/2011; Biscone & Vahdati 2011, 2012; Basafa & Rahmati 1391/2011; Garazhian 1389/2010; 2012; Francfort et al. 2014).

In 2008 the author conducted an archaeological survey in the area of Esfarayen between the plains of Nishapur to the east and Jajarm to the west. This survey shows that in the ancient times the area in question was an interface zone between Central Asia and the Iranian Plateau, at times

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<sup>1</sup> A list of soundings and excavations in various parts of Khorasan exceeds fifty projects and cannot be given here. For a complete overview of the history of archaeological activities in Khorasan see Labbaf 1391/2013.

<sup>2</sup> It is true that some of the Neolithic sites may have been buried under alluvial sedimentation, but the fact that many of the large, imposing prehistoric sites such as Yarim Tepe in Darreh-Gaz plain, T. Yam, T. Shirvan, T. Devin in the Atrak zone, T. Qamari, T. Nanvy, T. Pahlavan etc in the Kal-e Shur river basin in Esfarayen and Jajarm area have not yet been excavated clearly show that, contrary to Garazhian's opinion (2012: 20), the lack of field research on prehistoric sites of Khorasan should have had other reasons than inaccessibility of prehistoric sites.

being differentially influenced to various degrees by one or both cultural areas (Vahdati, forthcoming).

The site of Jayran Tepe, discovered in the survey of Esfarayen plain (site IS-156), is one of the recently excavated sites which provide us with invaluable information about the cultural interactions of this part of north-eastern Iran both with the Gorgan and Misrian plain (ancient Dehistan), the plain of Damghan, as well as the lowlands of Murghab delta (Margiana) in the late second and early first millennium BC. The following report briefly discusses the materials found in the first season of excavation at Jayran Tepe.

### Geography

The area of Esfarayen in northern Khorasan is a fertile, well-watered area, drained by the Bidvaz and Rouin rivers, and it comprises both wide and intensively-cultivated flat zone as well as upland pasture areas. The northern part of Esfarayen is occupied by the Aladagh mountain ranges (a continuation of the Alborz system) separating the region of Esfarayen from the upper Atrak valley and provides summer pasture (or *yelaq*) for the Kurdish nomadic tribes. The southern part is a flat zone consisting of vast expanses of plains bounded to the south by the small, narrow ridges that separate Esfarayen from the Jovain corridor. In the southern part of the plain flows the Kal-e Shur (Salt-River), which is the final destination of all the perennial rivers and seasonal streams originating from the northern mountainous zone. This situation has created a well-developed network of streams collecting all the water running off the northern mountains in to the Kal-e Shur. These rivers and streams have deposited eroded materials from the northern mountains and have built up a series of small and large deltas and alluvial fans, which are the most remarkable geomorphological feature of the plain. These fans played an important role in the establishment of ancient settlements, especially during historical and Islamic periods; almost all the qanat systems in the region that irrigated the lower desertic flood plains have their sources there.

Jayran Tepe is located in the central part of the plain of Esfarayen at 57° 19' 365" E, 37° 01' 467" N, at an altitude of 1082 m above sea level. The site is situated some 15 km as the crow flies to the southwest of the town of Esfarayen (Pl. 1-2). The mound is a rather large site, covering an area of nearly 2 acres and consisted of two mounds oriented southeast-northwest



(fig. 1). The Southern Mound is larger, approximately oval shaped, and rises about 8 m above the surrounding plain. The eastern side of the mound slopes away gently to a series of natural rises. The western slope, on the other hand, drops steeply for more than 8 m to the surrounding flat lands. In the surface of Southern Mound, especially in the lower slopes of the western side, diagnostic sherds of the late Iron Age were found (Achaemenid-Parthian periods).

The North Mound is smaller and almost semi-circular in shape. Its flat summit measures about 40 by 40 m and joins to the South Mound by a flat area, but on the north drops steeply for 4 m above the flat lands. Although the Southern Mound is almost intact, the western side of the flat joining area and the flat summit of the North Mound are both pitted with clandestine diggings, where a concentration of archaeological materials including sherds of Namazga VI period, diagnostic handmade painted pottery of Yaz I type, and Grey Ware of Archaic Dehistan, as well as agglomerations of cobblestones could be seen scattered around the illegal holes. In general, artifact density on the surface of the North Mound is much greater than on the Southern Mound.

## Excavation

The first season of excavation at Jayran Tepe began on 20 June, 2012 and continued for one month. Excavation was done under the auspices of the Iranian Center for Archaeological Research (ICAR), and directed by the author. The team consisted of Ali A. Vahdati (director), Mr. Behzad Talesh, Mr. Sa'id Shanjamali, and Hadi Mohammadi (topographer). The main goal of excavation at Jayran Tepe was to study the Bronze and Iron Age cultural sequence of the Esfarayen plain in the southern foothills of the Aladagh Mountains and to compare the yielded data and materials with the results of several decades of fieldwork on the Bronze and Iron Ages sites of southern Turkmenistan. We also aimed at reaching a better understanding of the relationship between this part of northeastern Iran with the central plateau of Iran, the Gorgan, and Misrian plains (ancient Dehistan) on the one hand, and with the piedmont zone of southern Turkmenistan and the lowlands of Murghab delta (Margiana) on the other.

We excavated a total of three trenches; two of these were located on the flat summit of the North Mound (trenches 1 and 3) and one (trench 2) on the western edge of the summit of the South Mound (fig. 1). Excavation

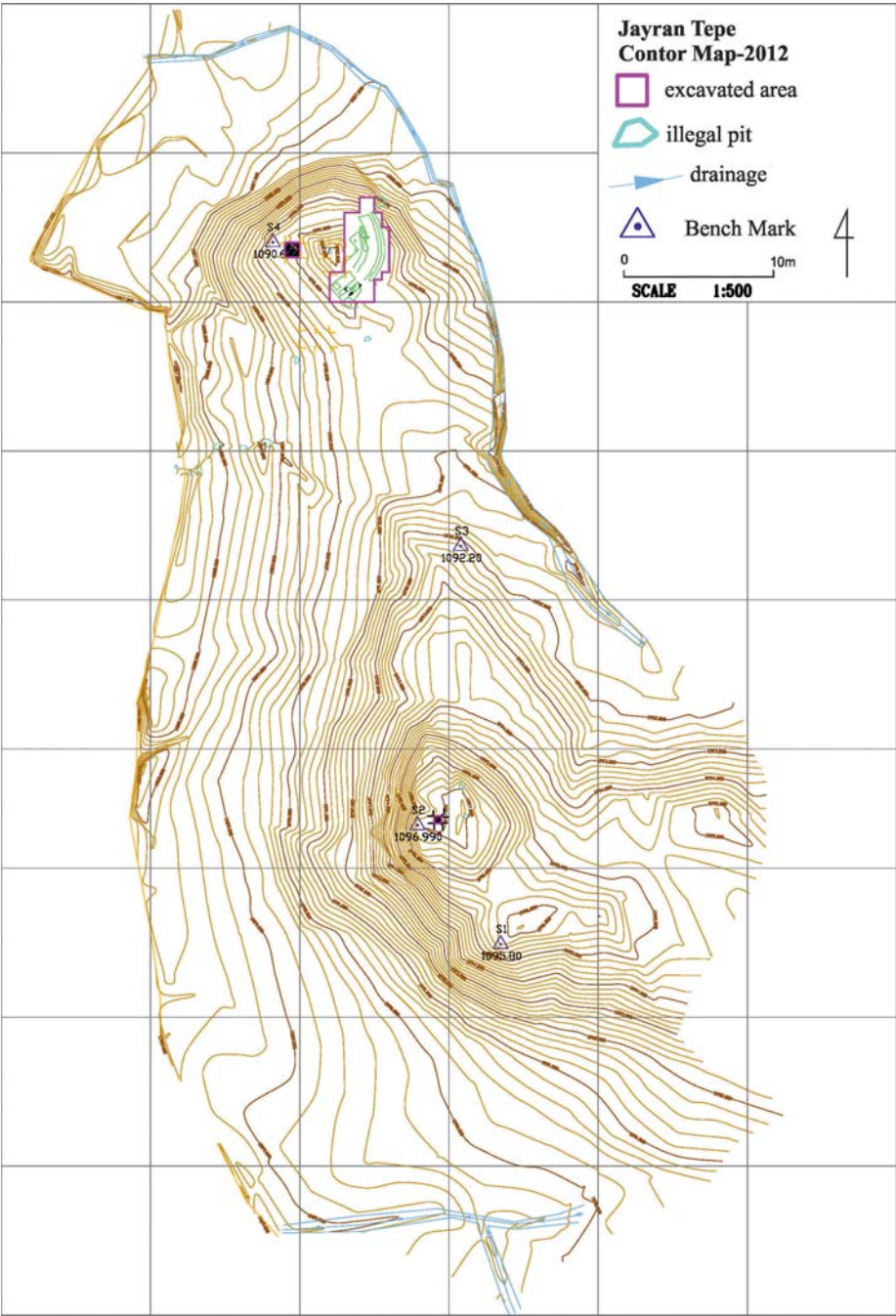


Fig. 1. Contour map of Jayran Tepe and location of excavated trenches.

started around one of the biggest illegal pits on the central part of the North Mound, where a monumental building was encountered, and then extended over the whole of the eastern half of the summit of the Northern Mound to expose as extensive an architectural plan as possible. On the South Mound excavation stopped soon as we realized that the thickness of cultural deposits are few, restricted to the topmost layer, and the rest of deposits are natural layers, totally devoid of cultural materials. Below, we briefly describe the main characteristics of each of the excavated trenches:

### **Trench 1**

Trench 1 was a 5x5m square opened in a flat area on the central part of the North Mound. Having collected the surface pottery, excavation began with the removal of the surface layer which was a very soft earth containing a considerable amount of herbal roots. Excavation continued to a depth of 50 cm and the whole layer was a natural deposit formed by accumulation of wind-blown whitish sand and silt. At this depth we observed a patch of ash and burnt ground near the north wall of the trench and next to it traces of an oval and an oblong rectangular pit filled by a soft, reddish brown soil marking the upper edge of two grave pits. These were individual burials each contained remains of a human skeleton both oriented southeast to northwest (Pl. 3). Grave 1 was a simple shallow pit measuring 83x62 cm and some 35 cm deep which contained seemingly commingled remains of a human skeleton. The skull was not in anatomical connection and found 20 cm above the skeleton near the mouth of the pit.<sup>3</sup> No burial-goods were found in association with this burial. Only a fragment of handmade painted pottery of the Yaz I type was found between the bones which is clearly intrusive and perhaps thrown inside the grave with the backfill of the pit. Grave 2 was an oblong rectangular pit measuring 100x58 cm and 60 cm deep that contained a human skeleton in flexed position oriented SE-NW (fig. 2). This grave also does not contain any burial-goods. In the lack of burial-goods and specific

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<sup>3</sup> Given the fact that Early Iron Age burials with “scattered bone remains” in south Central Asia (e. g. Ulugh-depe, Geoktchik-depe) have occasionally been interpreted as evidence of “practice of flesh removal” resulted from Zoroastrian funeral practices (Lecomte 2005: 465; Bendezu-Sarmiento and Lhuillier 2011: 247) the disarticulated human skeleton in Grave 1, Trench 1 of Jayran Tepe may at first recall the Mazdean funeral practice, but the fact that Grave 2, which is clearly contemporary with Grave 1, contains a complete skeleton placed directly on the earth casts some doubts on this hypothesis.

grave structure it is difficult to precisely date these two graves, but as the North Mound is seemingly used only during the early Iron Age we may tentatively place them into the same chronological horizon.

## Trench 2

This trench was a 2.5x2.5m square opened on the summit of the Southern Mound and excavated to the depth of 120 cm below the surface. Here we distinguished three distinct layers all consisting of natural deposits. Only the uppermost layer produced archaeological materials, including diagnostic sherds of the Late Iron Age. This layer began immediately under the surface and consisted of reddish-brown sand and clay surface with low artifact density terminating in a depth of 45 cm. Below it were two compact, naturally deposited, whitish sand and silt layers totally devoid of any cultural materials. These sand and silt layers were similar to the layers we reached below the archaeological deposits in Trench 1 and 3 and mark the virgin soil of Jayran Tepe.

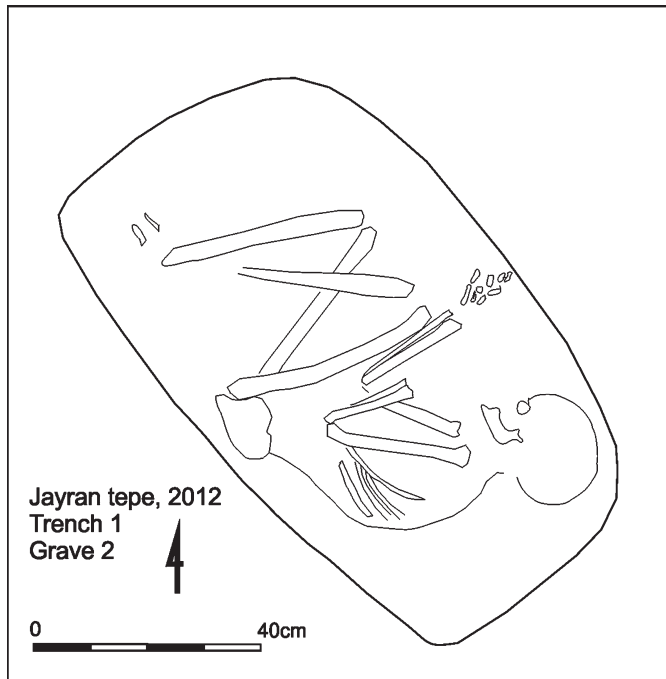


Fig. 2. Position of skeleton in Grave 2, Trench 1.

### Trench 3

Trench 3 opened in a flat area on the summit of the North Mound, some 20m to the west of Trench 1. The initial size of the trench was 5x5m, but as we encountered a huge mid-brick structure some 10 cm below the surface covering almost whole of the trench, we had to enlarge the trench in several stages finally extending over the whole of the eastern half of the summit of the Northern Mound. Repeated enlargement of the trench exposed an area of 470m<sup>2</sup>, containing parts of a huge structure with a circular external plan built with mud-bricks measuring 60x37x8 cm and with clay and sand mortar (Pl. 4 and fig. 3). Here, several curving walls and corridors, as well as a series of rectangular rooms were uncovered. Because the whole structure is very close to the surface (10 cm), however, it is not very well preserved; its remaining height has a maximum of five courses of mud-bricks, while in places it is either totally destroyed or very poorly preserved, making the exact recognition of the plan difficult.

The main wall of the building was a long, curving structure approximately 3.60m wide and flanked by two corridors. The wall was constructed with large, rectangular mud-bricks (60x37x8 cm) of which only two rows were preserved: a header course of six mud-bricks alternating with a stretcher course of 9 mud-bricks.

The eastern corridor was 1m wide and separated the main wall from an outer wall. This outer wall is 1m wide and constructed from mud-bricks of the same size but with a different masonry bond: a course of two mud-bricks one laid in width the other in length.

The western corridor was approximately 2m wide, separating the main wall from a central building with rectangular internal plan (Room 4). A concentration of pebble stones on the floor of the western corridor shows that this was probably a paved surface. Illicit digging has destroyed parts of this assumed pavement.

The main wall bounds in the south-west to a group of three rectangular rooms: a rectangular room of 7.10 x 1.50cm (Room 1), and two square rooms of 2 x 2m (Rooms 2 and 3). All the rooms were filled with a type of distinctive 'sterile', reddish-brown clay, clearly distinguishable from the surrounding fill. Except for fragments of red mud-bricks inside the fill of Room 1, no cultural material (potsherd, bone and charcoal fragments, etc.) was found in the excavation of these rooms.



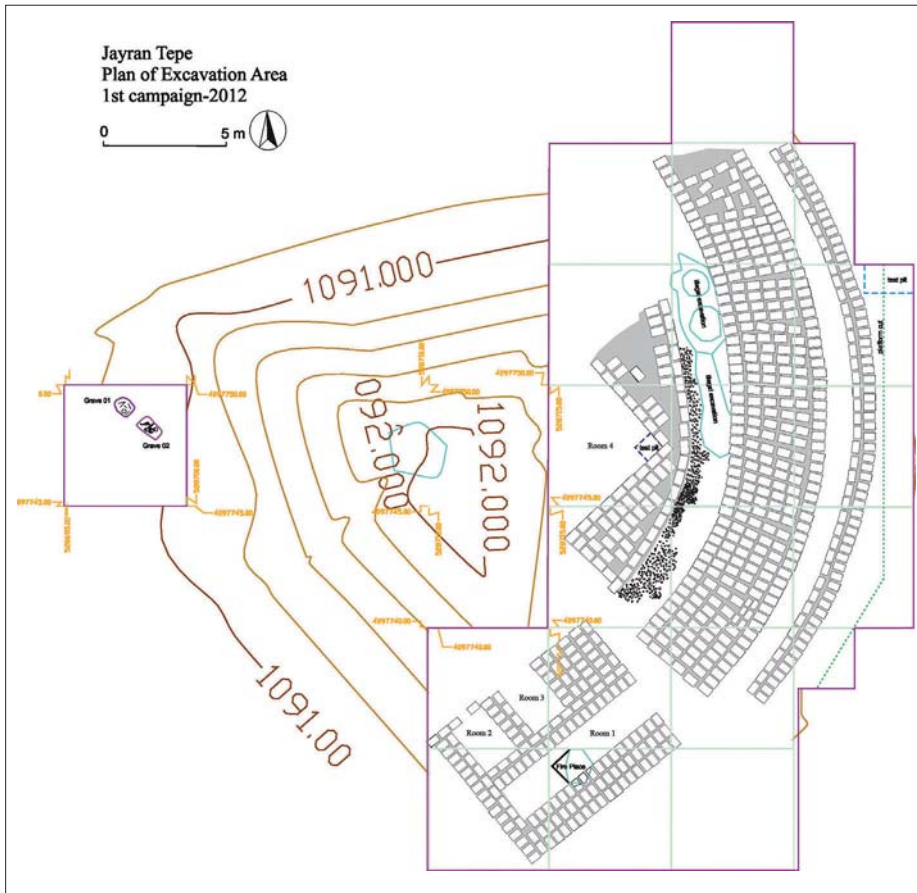


Fig. 3. Plan of excavated building in Trench 3.

Room 1 is one of the best-preserved parts of the architectural complex found in Jayran Tepe. Its walls were preserved to a height of about 50 cm (5 mud-brick courses). The room had a beaten floor, two cm thick and partly destroyed by an illegal pit. In the central part of the room we found a low rectangular platform measuring 1x1.15 m, about 5 cm in height, made of *kahgel* (clay and straw) (Pl. 5). The upper part of the platform was covered with thin lenses of ash and the whole surface of it was blackened by fire. Obviously, the platform had some sort of function connected to fire but whether it was a sacred fire or not is an open question.

According to the data from the first season of excavation at Jayran Tepe, the architectural complex on top of the North Mound is consisted of a central building (Room 4), rectangular from inside and round from outside, encircling by two concentric perimeter walls. Moreover, a series of rectangular rooms were associated with this complex. Two small test pits in the western edge of the curving walls showed that the whole complex is built on top of an artificially made platform formed by cutting edges of a natural hill to make a rampart for erection of the huge building complex which can provisionally be called a 'citadel'. This type of 'fortified citadel sites' built on artificial platforms has been reported from several Iron Age sites (e.g. Kuchuk-tepe, Yaz-depe, Arvali-depe, Koine-depe) from south central Asia (Kohl 1984: 193-200).

## Finds

Archaeological materials found during the first season of excavation at Jayran Tepe are not varied, including a total number of 3,705 potsherds, very few bone remains and even fewer charcoal particles. Trench 1 and 2 produced only a limited number of potsherds; Trench 3, as it is more extensive, yielded a considerably greater amount of potsherds, all found in corridors between the circling walls. As noted above, it is interesting that no artifact was found in the room fill. Only an ash layer and some charcoal particles were found on the small platform found inside Room 1.

The pottery assemblage of Jayran Tepe falls into four categories: A) a type of wheel-turned plain buff ware with diagnostic forms of Namazga VI period. This type was found in limited numbers only in the uppermost layer of Trench 1 and 3 on the North Mound and is datable to the Late Bronze Age; B) a type of hand-made, painted or plain buff pottery characteristic of Yaz I and datable to the Early Iron Age. Painted patterns are simple geometric designs such as hanging triangles filled with hatches or cross-hatching, bands of undulating lines, simple bands, checker-boards, etc. painted with red, dark-brown or black on a buff background (Pl. 6 A-C, fig. 4). This type predominates in all of the excavated layers in Trench 1 and 3 and consisted more than 85% of the pottery assemblage of Jayran Tepe. C) a wheel-turned grey ware distinguished by its very high quality, polished surface and diagnostic forms belonging to the Archaic Dehistan culture (Pl. 6 D-F, fig. 5, a-f); D) a type of wheel-turned, plain buff to orange pottery, diagnostic of the late Iron Age (Achaemenid-Parthian period)

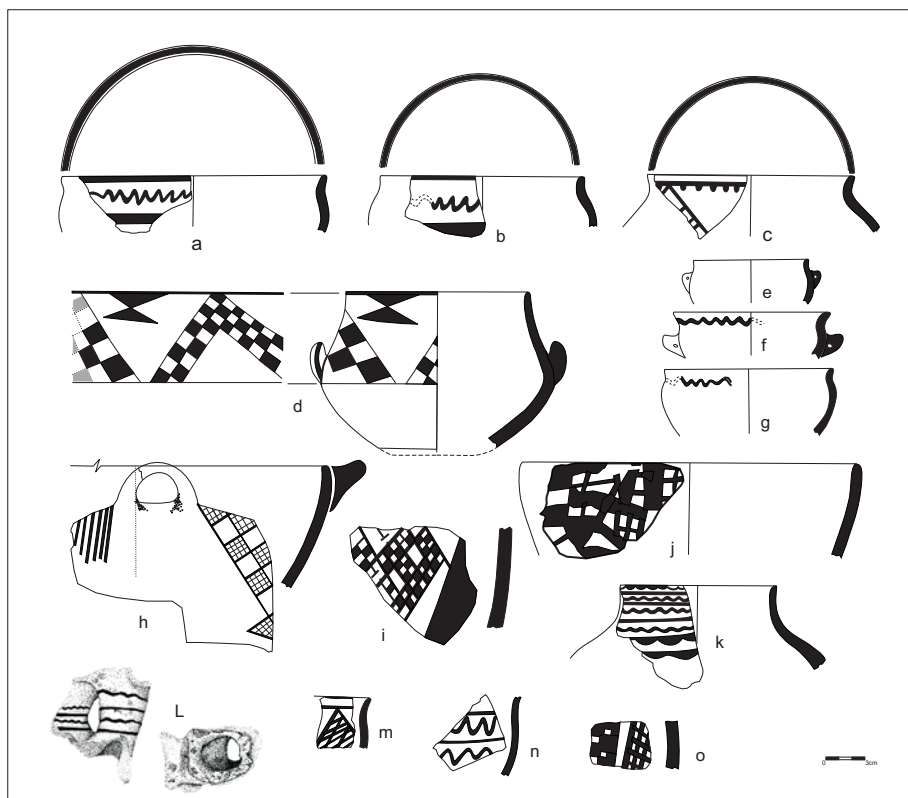


Fig. 4. Hand-made, painted pottery of Yaz I type from Jayran Tepe (Drawing by A. Rashidi).

(Pl. 6 G-I, fig. 5, j-o). This type predominates in Trench 2 on the South Mound and the uppermost layer of Trench 3 on the North Mound.

## Conclusions

Examination of the available data from the surface survey and the first season of excavation at Jayran Tepe indicates that the site apparently first inhabited during the late Bronze Age (Namazga VI) and then continued to be occupied during the early and late Iron Age (Yaz I/Archaic Dehistan to the Achaemenid and Parthian period). Pottery of the earliest and the latest period of occupation were found only on the surface and in the uppermost

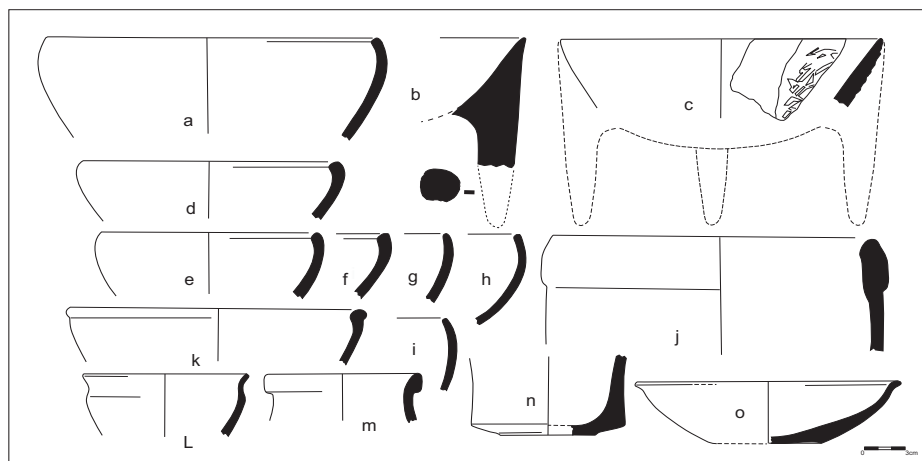


Fig. 5. Grey ware of Archaic Dehistan type (a-f), and Late Iron Age pottery (j-o) from Jayran Tepe.

layers of the excavated areas. From the excavation of intact layers only two types of pottery were obtained: hand-made, painted or plain buff ware of Yaz I type and wheel-turned, polished grey ware of Archaic Dehistan type. Both of these pottery types are belonging to the early Iron Age, being very well-known in the piedmont zone of the south Central Asia.

Yaz I pottery is characteristic of early Iron Age in southeastern Turkmenistan, in the old agricultural centers on the foothills of the Kopet Dag and the Murghab river delta (Masson and Sarianidi 1972: 158-9, fig. 45, Kohl 1984; Pilipko 1986); while the Archaic Dehistan is the typical Iron Age pottery of Misrian plain in southwestern Turkmenistan (Masson and Sarianidi 1972: 156-7: fig. 43; Kohl 1984; Lecomte 2005). However contemporary, these two types of pottery have never been reported in association in a single site in Central Asia, but in the area of Esfaryen (and east of Jajarm) we have found sites (including Jayran Tepe) with both Yaz I and Archaic Dehistan pottery, clearly indicating that the area is a significant 'contact zone' or 'cultural frontier', having interaction both with the Gorgan plain (Hyrcania) and the piedmont zone of Kopet-Dag (Biscione and Vahdati 2012: 353).

The architectural remains uncovered in Trench 3 still need to be fully excavated and detailed analyses of the artifacts and architectural remains

from the excavation are in their preliminary stages, so the following remarks are tentative: the architectural remains found at Jayran Tepe are built on top of a platform and represent a complex architectural sequence, which is still difficult to interpret with precision. The circular general plan of the complex with parallel perimeter walls and intermediate corridors, the considerable width of the walls, as well as general lack of finds probably implies that the complex was not used for the daily life of common people. Taking into account the strategic position of the site in the center of the agricultural plain of Esfarayen (Pl. 2), and the fact that all the contemporary sites of Esfarayen are of very small size, less than 0.5 acres, and often located in the margins of the plain it could be assumed these sites were dependent on Jayran, which served as a central settlement with a 'citadel' on top of a platform. Presumably, the citadel belonged to the ruling class of the local Iron Age population.

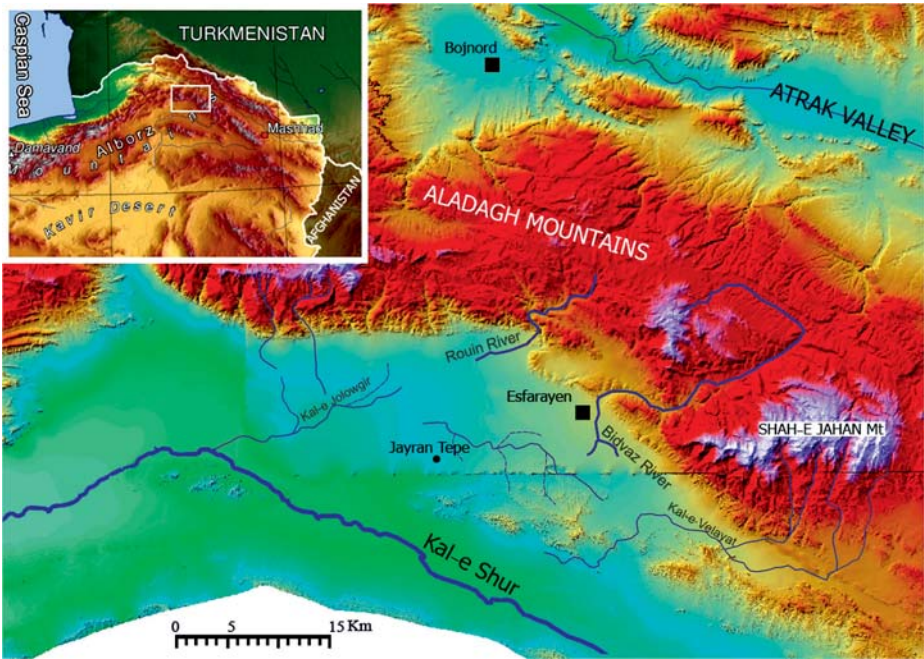
In Central Asia, most of the oasis settlements were dependent on large-scale irrigation systems resulting from a landlord-based political organization (Hiebert 1998: 153). In this socio-economic system, the ruling minority was often living in huge, fortified complexes often built on top of high platforms (Masson and Sarianidi 1972: 155-166). Further excavation at Jayran Tepe will help to elucidate empirical aspects of this problem and provide us with fresh evidence of the cultural interaction between Iran and Central Asia in the late second and early first millennia BC.

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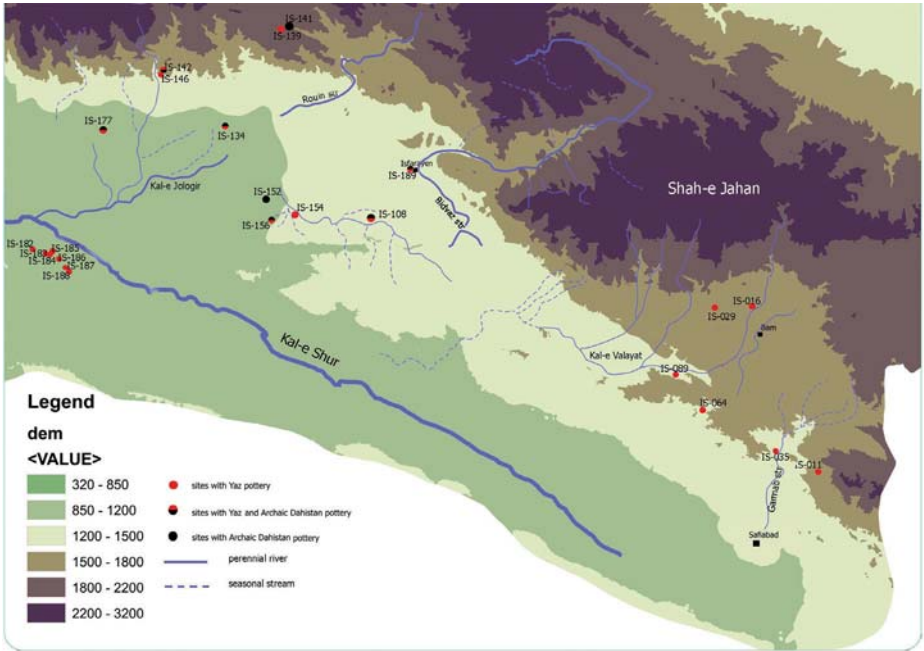
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Pl. 1. Location of Jayran Tepe in the plain of Esfaryen.



Pl. 2. Distribution of Iron Age sites (Yaz and Archaic Dehistan) in the plain of Esfaryen.



Pl. 3. General view of Grave 1 and 2 in Trench 1.

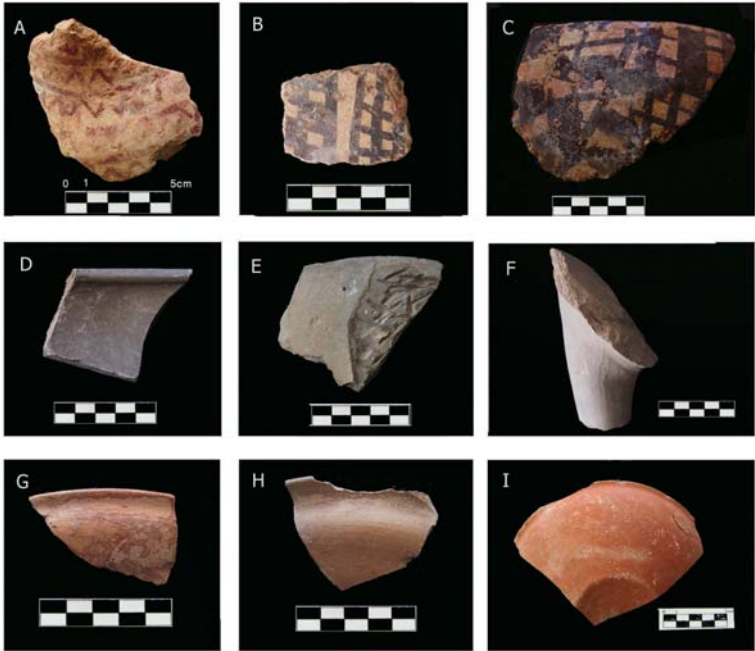


Pl. 4. General view of the excavated building in Trench 3.





Pl. 5. The low platform with traces of fire atop found in Room 1, Trench 3.



Pl. 6. The main pottery types found in the excavation of Jayran Tepe.

## GŪNESPĀN: A LATE IRON AGE SITE IN THE MEDIAN HEARTLAND<sup>1</sup>

BY

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**Abstract:** Gūnespān-e Pātappēh is located 30 km to the southeast of the modern town of Malayer in Hamadan Province, 1 km away from the Kalān Dam. The site was excavated during six seasons as part of the archaeological salvage project inside the dam reservoir. The Islamic, Parthian, Achaemenid, Median and Bronze Age remains discovered in the excavations show that Gūnespān was an important site in the Zagros Mountains. Most important, however, is the discovery during the fourth and fifth seasons of excavation of a fortified Median building showing close similarities to other Median architecture at nearby Nush-i Jan, Godin and Baba Jan. This newly uncovered structure sheds new light on the Median presence in western Iran.

**Keywords:** Malayer, Gūnespān-e Pātappēh, Median Period, Iron Age III, Architectural decorations

### Introduction

The initial survey to build the Kalān Dam began in 2000 and archaeological investigations were launched six years later. As the result of visits to the dam reservoir, the prominent site of Gūnespān was chosen for archaeological excavation (Pl. 1. A). Gūnespān (N. 048°54'20.4", E. 34°02'9.48") is a mound located ca. 30 km to the southeast of Malayer at an elevation of 1936 m above sea level with almost equally steep contours on all sides. The mound rises to a height of 27 m above the surrounding fields on the bank of Kalān River with an area of 160 m by 140 m (Pl. 1. B). The Kalān River rises in the mountains of Zāliyān in Markazi Province and is called "Malāyer Rūd" as it flows closer to Malayer and

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<sup>1</sup> The present paper describes the result of 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> seasons of excavation directed by the first author.

Nush-i Jan. The site was founded upon a natural rocky outcrop with an oval shape containing archaeological deposits in the upper levels (Pl. 2. A). A village named Pātappēh was located at the base of the site (Naseri 2010a; 2010b), though it has been abandoned as the area is now submerged (Pl. 2. B).

In the first three seasons of excavation at the site in 2002, 2007 and 2008 both Islamic and Parthian remains were identified. However, much deeper deposits of Iron Age III (Godin II) and Bronze Age (Godin III-IV) had been left unexcavated. This led us to focus our new excavations in seasons four and five on gathering as much information as possible about these periods. Though much information is now available from the Iranian Iron Age, very little is known regarding the end of this period as it coincided with the archaeological remains of the Medes. The particular data of this time are not well divided from both the preceding and succeeding sub-periods. Although several known sites such as Nush-i Jan, Godin, Baba Jan and Ziweyeh have yielded very significant information, the emergence of Median culture has been rarely investigated. Thus, the excavation team mainly focused on identifying Median remains. In addition to previous data from the above-mentioned sites, these new findings could improve our knowledge of Median archaeology for the future.

### **Previous investigations at the site**

While the dam was being constructed, six seasons of archaeological excavation were undertaken at Gūnēspān. In the first season, some architectural traces were found in a small area indicating Safavid and Seljuk occupations (Khaksar 2002). Several years later, in 2007, H. Rezvani directed the second season, it lasted three months and during this period the surrounding plain was also surveyed. This season resulted in the discovery of Islamic, Parthian and some Median remains. The Parthian occupation is marked by a massive castle or fort built of clay and mud-brick with strong stone walls. The dating of this structure is based on the occurrence of Clinky Ware and a copper coin of Vologases IV (192-148 BCE). All in all, these two seasons documented three periods; Islamic (I), Parthian (II) and Median (III) (Rezvani 2007; Rezvani & Rashidi Arzandeh 2011). Moreover, another site, named Shat-Ghileh, was also excavated by K. Roustaei (2007). This site, which is located close to Gūnēspān, is contemporary with Godin VI and VII. The third season of excavation at



Gūnespān in 2008 was directed by M. Malekzadeh (2008). Although the Median remains were targeted during this season, because of climatic conditions and a lack of sufficient resources it was not possible to investigate them.

As a result of archaeological investigations within the dam reservoir, the earliest occupations could be dated to the late 4<sup>th</sup> millennium BCE, a period known as Godin VI and VII in this region. Both these phases were discovered at Shat-Ghileh. The succeeding Godin IV, III and II phases are contemporaneous with Gūnespān V, IV and III; as mentioned above, Gūnespān II and I date to the Parthian and Islamic periods respectively.

## **Excavation**

The main objective in a salvage project is to excavate and record any cultural remains before their destruction. The fourth and fifth seasons were not only concentrated on Median deposits, but a stratigraphic sounding was also dug to record the stratigraphic sequence at the site. At the beginning of the fourth season, the site was divided into 10 m by 10 m squares (Pls. 3-4). A matrix chart was used to show the stratigraphic relationships of each entity, such as deposits and features, which were recorded as different “contexts” with a four digit number, such as 1001 or 5005, where the left number indicates the trench number, and the succeeding numbers indicate the context number (Pl. 5). In terms of site formation processes, the Iron Age III layers filling the structures could be described as the result of gradual erosion over time (Pl. 6). No evidence showing any unusual destruction was seen during the excavation of the architectural remains. It should be noted that only one later pit (C. 3021), in which Clinky Ware was found, was dug into the Median deposits. The Iron Age III remains were discovered in Trenches 3, 4, and 5 in the northern half of the site (Pl. 3). Trench 3, measuring 15 m by 15 m, was opened during the fourth season, while Trench 4 (20 m by 10 m), and Trench 5 (10 m by 10 m), were opened during the fifth season (Pl. 5).

## **Architectural remains**

The Median architectural remains consisted of five rooms and an oval curved wall (fortification wall) which surrounded the rooms on both the northern and eastern sides. These structures are numbered here as Rooms

1 to 5 to enable easier description. All rooms (except for Room 5) are located in the south part and show a parallel rectangular-shaped plan.

Room 1, measuring 21.6 m by 3.3 m, is located at the southern most end of the architectural complex of the site. Rooms 5 and 2 are situated to its north and west respectively. To the east, there was a space between the curving wall and east wall of Room 1 that was filled with clay and various-sized cobblestones. The room lacks architectural decoration; this is the only one of the long parallel rooms whose southern end was uncovered in the fourth and fifth campaigns, though time limitations meant that we could only investigate the upper part of that wall. Thus, the total wall height is unknown. Since the northern half of the room was excavated down to the floor and no traces of a doorway were found, the doorway must have been located in the only partly excavated southern half of the room.

Room 2, measuring 21.6 m by 3.3 m, is connected to Room 5 by a doorway in its north wall; Rooms 1 and 3 lie to its southeast and northwest respectively. This room also lacks any decoration; we excavated half of the deposits inside the room down to the clay floor. In a sounding at the north side of the room, some various-sized slabs were found under the floor.

The short northeastern wall of Room 3, measuring 21.6 m by 3.6 m, is part of the southwestern wall of Room 5 and Rooms 2 and 4 are situated to its southeast and northwest respectively. What marks this room out in comparison with the others is the presence of six similar pilasters attached to the northwest wall; these are positioned 2 m apart from each other and have a triple-stepped outline. The pilasters seem to be used as decorative elements as no sign of bonding is seen (Pl. 7). Similar buttresses are common in the architectural tradition of the Iron Age in western Iran. Simple examples have been discovered at many sites such as Hasanlu (Dyson 1989: 115, fig. 10), Baba Jan (Goff 1977: 104, fig. 1), Godin (Young & Levine 1974: 116, pl. 37), Nush-i Jan (Stronach & Roaf 2007: 55, fig. 1.9), Ulug Depe (Boucharlat 2005: 503, fig.3), Gubba (Fujii 1981: 28, fig. 10), Tille Höyük (French 1986: 208, map. 1), Ozbaki (Madjidzadeh 2010: 343, map. 26) and various parts of Persepolis (Schmidt 1953: map. 21). However, a corner buttress with a triple-stepped outline was excavated in the White Room at Baba Jan (Goff 1977: 110, fig. 6, pl. 6a) while the two-sided three-stepped examples have as yet been discovered only at Gūnespān. This could be taken as an indicator of technological difference

in architectural decorations. Two-stepped piers are also seen on the exterior face of the later building of Gate R at Pasargadae in the Achaemenid period (Stronach 1978: 45, fig. 22; p. 48, fig. 24).

Room 4 is 3.44 m in width and is of unknown length as its excavation remained incomplete. Compared to other rooms, however, a longer measurement can be assumed. This room is surrounded by the oval wall in the north and the joint wall of both Rooms 3 and 5 to the southeast. In the course of the excavation of Room 4 two triangular-headed niches were discovered in the interior face of its southeast wall, 78 cm above the floor. The southern niche measured 61 cm by 51 cm, while the northern niche measured 63 cm by 64 cm (Pls. 8-9). Such niches, which are typical architectural features of both the Median and Achaemenid periods, have also been found at different sites such as Nush-i Jan (Stronach & Roaf 2007: 99, fig. 3.6; p. 103, fig. 3.8), Godin (in Room 21: Young & Levine 1974: 32; pl. 28), Baba Jan (Goff 1977: 109, fig. 5), Mūsh Tappeh (Saraf 2004: [fig.3-4]), Ziweyeh (Mo'tamedi 1996: 326), Ozbaki (Madjidzadeh [2001]: pl. 28-9; 2011: 552-3, fig. 356-9), Sialk (Girshman 1939: pl. 6, no. 4), Delaziyan (Mahyar & Kabiri 1987: 35, pl. 27; fig. 5), Ulug Depe (Lecomte 2013: fig. 11-12) Persepolis (Schmidt 1935: 203, pl. a; Tajvidi 1977: 200-211, figs. 158-64) and Dahan-i Ghulaman (Scerrato 1966: figs. 31-2). It should be noted that further excavations in this room resulted in uncovering 6 square holes which ran through the northwest wall (Pl. 10). These holes might have functioned as ventilation slots like those found at Nush-i Jan (Stronach & Roaf 2007: pl. 31), Baba Jan (Goff 1977: 109, fig. 5) and Ozbaki (Madjidzadeh [2001]: fig. 32). This suggests that this was an external wall when it was constructed.

Room 5 (10.4 m by 3.6 m), which was joined to the internal wall of the oval wall, was excavated down to the floor; the southwest and northwest walls met in a rectangular corner while the room was limited on the north and east by the internal face of the curved oval wall (Pl. 11. A). This curving perimeter wall was clearly later than the other walls and cut off the northeastern part of the original room (see below for discussion of the architectural phasing). It is connected to Room 2 by a doorway in the south-west wall of Room 5; the threshold of this doorway was one mud-brick above the floor and had a triangular-headed top, 1.4 m in height, set within a rectangular rabbetted frame measuring 1.79 m by 1.45 m (Pls. 11-15). Such doorways with a single internal rabbet are well known in the architecture of the Neo-Assyrian period and that of the Iron Age of

western Iran (Roaf 1998); its triangular-headed top is also seen at different Median sites such as Nush-i Jan (Stronach & Roaf 2007: pl. 29b), Godin (Young & Levine 1974: 32 and 162, pl. 28; Gopnik & Rothman 2011: figs. 7.16 and 7.22), Baba Jan (Goff 1977: 110, fig. 6, pl. 8b) and Mūsh Tappeh (Motarjem 2013: fig 4). In the western corner of the room a part of a decorative pilaster (C. 3034 in Pl. 5) is visible (Pl. 11).

The curved wall (The oval fortification wall), 3 m in width (C. 3017 in Pl. 5), was discovered in the northern part of Trench 3 (Pl. 16. A). It surrounded the excavated parts of Rooms 4, 5 and 1 on their north and east sides. Some parts of the wall had already been destroyed during the earlier excavations (the destroyed areas are shown as dashed lines in Pl. 5). Furthermore heavy earth-moving machinery used during earlier excavations on the north side of the site unfortunately resulted in less than 50 cm of the wall surviving in places (Pl. 16. A). To the east between the south-east wall of Room 1 (C. 4002) and the continuation of the curved wall to the south, there was a hollow area which was filled with clay and cobbles (Pl. 16. B).

As mentioned above, the architectural remains found at Gūnespān show a very close similarity with Median architecture, though some distinctive elements are also seen. The walls (with the exception of the later curving wall) were rectangular with a similar width (1.4 m); some well-preserved walls survived to a height of 2.5 m. The mud-bricks used were all made similarly (measuring 42×25×12 cm); however, broken mud-bricks were also used at wall junctions. Clay mortar between the mud-bricks is between 1 and 4 cm thick. Such materials have also been used in other Median structures. The mud-bricks are more or less the same size in different sites including Nush-i Jan, 40×25×12 cm (Stronach & Roaf 2007: 181), Godin, 41×24×13 cm (Young 1969: 24-7), and Mūsh Tappeh, 42×24×11 cm (Motarjem 2013). As seen from excavated evidence, the inner faces of the walls must have been coated with gypsum plaster, though it has been mostly destroyed as the result of natural post-depositional changes such as humidity. Plaster remains are visible in Room 4; the fact that broken plastered mud-bricks have fallen across the floor could be taken as a possible indicator of a roof made from the same materials; these are most likely remains of long mud-brick struts like those found at Nush-i Jan (Stronach & Roaf 2007: pl. 11). It should be noted that other rooms have also yielded some plaster remains. The floors in all the rooms consisted of tamped clay. We removed the floor of Room 5 and part of the floor of

Room 3, revealing a layer of stones (Pl. 16. C). This infrastructure is also seen beneath the Iron Age III (Median) structures visible in the south slope of the site (Pl. 17). It seems that the Medes used the lower structures as a substructure or platform on which they built their buildings.

### Architectural phasing

Analyzing and also investigating the emergence and evolution of the structures indicated three phases in the Median architecture at the site (Pl. 18. A).

Phase 1, which includes the earliest traces, could be identified from determining the relationship of Room 4 with Rooms 3 and 5 (C. 3005=4005). The southeast face of the wall between Room 2 and Rooms 3 and 5, which was decorated with seven piers, could help us to distinguish the architectural phasing. This face of the wall of Room 4 was subsequently used as the northwest walls of Rooms 3 and 5. This could be supported by the fact that such decoration has been used originally on the outer, not inner, sides of the walls seen on many Median structures found elsewhere. Moreover, the joining of that wall between Rooms 5 and 3 (C. 3011) and the decoration with piers could also support this interpretation. The northern wall of rooms 1, 2 and 3 abutted onto the eastern wall of room 4; this wall is also joined to one half of a two-sided pier (C. 3034). If we remove the wall, one more two-sided pier would be visible. Moreover, it should be mentioned that rooms 1, 2 and 3 establish rectangular areas with no alignment with room 4, indicating the fact that those walls built in the second stage tended towards an eastern direction.

To better understand the changes that occurred with the structures, we can refer to those discovered in Godin (Pl. 18. B); the outer (eastern and southern) walls and columned hall (eastern wall) had first been decorated with piers, but then as storage areas were built they became interior walls (Young & Levine 1974: 120, fig. 40; Gopnik 2011: 304, fig. 7.7).

The second phase includes rooms 1, 2, 3 and 5 with a similar rectangular plan. The northern wall of rooms 1, 2 and 3 was entirely joined to the mid walls; but, as already mentioned, such joining is not seen in relation to the east wall in room 4. This could show a subsequent stage of building indicated by the presence of piers in rooms 3 and 5. Such piers are not seen in other rooms. Thus, the second phase consisted of a rectangular building which added to the previous structures to increase the room numbers.

The third phase is marked by the construction of the oval fortification wall, 3 m thick, uncovered at the northern and northeastern sides of the site. It is assumed that the fort was finally built as the enclosure wall around the buildings. This wall may be compared with the curving wall at the east end of Tepe Nush-i Jan (Pl. 21b) and the surrounding wall at Ozbaki (Pl. 21g). It should be noted that our knowledge of the Median architecture in Gūnespān is mostly limited to what has been discussed above. Due to limited time and funds, we could not uncover the short southwestern walls of Rooms 1, 2, 3, and 4 (C. 5007), though the upper surface of the wall in Room 1 was excavated to a depth of 50cm. Also, it seems that the southwestern end of Room 2 was fully excavated during the last season of excavation at the site, revealing a doorway in its southwestern wall. As further excavations were limited to small areas, no more information is available to characterize the nature of the neighboring buildings, though possible proposals could be suggested on the basis of similar contemporaneous Median structures known at other sites. What should be mentioned here is the existence of several phases of building at other Median sites; four phases at Godin (Gopnik 2011: 304, fig.7.7), at least six at Nush-i Jan (Stronach & Roaf 2007: 55, fig. 1.9) and even two at Gubba (Fujii 1981: 28, fig.10). Such successive phases of architecture were built in a relatively short time (850-550 BCE), indicating major changes in economic, social and political conditions, some of which may have been the consequence of external military actions.

## Pottery

As well as architectural remains, additional data including pottery, bones<sup>2</sup> and plant seeds were discovered in the excavations. However, no particular diagnostic Median artifact was found. Some lithics and bone tools have been found which were probably intrusive from earlier layers. A large amount of pottery was excavated, which is currently being analyzed<sup>3</sup>. The initial typological analysis of the pottery of this period in

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<sup>2</sup> The bone assemblage is being studied by Solmaz Amiri and Marjan Mashkour in the archaeometry Laboratory of University of Tehran and Radio carbon dating is being performed on organic material (bone and charcoal) through the UMR 7209 Archaeology, Archaeobotany Laboratory the CNRS- France.

<sup>3</sup> The Pottery assemblages are being analyzed by R. Naseri.



Table 1. Catalogue of pottery descriptions and parallels (see Pls. 19-20).

Context	RN (Registry Number)	No	Description	Parallels
3013	3015	6310	Bowl, Wheel-made, 5YR 6/6 Reddish yellow, Well-made, Mineral, Shiny flecks, Coarse.	Gopnik et al, 2011: fig. 7.54: 47; Goff 1985: fig. 3:9.
3013	3015	6312	Bowl, yellow, Well-made, 10YR 7/3 very pale brown (exterior), 5YR 6/6 reddish yellow (core), Mineral, Shiny flecks, Coarse.	Gopnik et al, 2011: fig.7.54:46; Goff 1985: fig. 3:9; Fahimi 2003: pl. 12:1.
3013	3015	6315	Small Bowl, Wheel-made, 10YR 7/3 very pale brown, Well-made, Mineral, Shiny flecks, Common.	Gopnik et al, 2011: fig. 7.56:81; Young & Levine 1974: fig. 47: 9; Goff 1985: figs. 2: 32, 33; Madjidzadeh 2010: pls. 82:3 & 61:10; Fahimi 2004: fig. 10:3; Fahimi 2005: fig. 5:1; Malekzadeh et al, 2014: pl. 12:10.
3046	3074	6301	Small Bowl, Wheel-made, 7.5YR 8/2 pinkish white, Well-made, Mineral, Shiny flecks, Fine.	Gopnik et al., 2011: fig.7.56:81; Young & Levine 1974, fig. 47:9; Goff 1985, fig. 2:32-33; Madjidzadeh 2010: pls. 82:3 & 61:10; Fahimi 2004: fig. 10:3; Fahimi 2005: fig. 5:1; Malekzadeh et al, 2014: pl. 12:11.
3037	3051	6219	Jar, Wheel-made, 5YR 6/6 Reddish yellow, Well-made, Mineral, Shiny flecks, Common.	Gopnik et al., 2011: fig.7.53:206; Stronach et al., 1978: fig 9:2; Madjidzadeh 2010: pl. 87:13.
3037	3051	6245	Jar, Wheel-made, 5YR 6/6 Reddish yellow, Well-made, Mineral, Shiny flecks, Common.	Gopnik et al., 2011: fig.7.53:206; Stronach et al., 1978: fig 9:2; Madjidzadeh 2010: pl. 87:13.

western Iran was carried out by Young (1965) and Dyson (1965) and we follow this typology here. Preliminary examination indicates that most of the potsherds excavated in Gūneshpān-e Pātappeh belong to Young's (1965) "Late Western Buff Ware Horizon" or Dyson's (1965) "Iron Age III". All the potsherds are buff or red in color, except for two grey and painted samples. The pottery is wheel-made and tempered with both mica and

quartz (Pl. 19). In terms of typology, very few forms are present; the most common forms from Gūnespān are handleless small bowls, horizontally handled bowls, and jars with a high neck or occasionally a short spout. Another popular form is the “S-carinated rim bowl” that is highly diagnostic of the Iron Age III (Pl. 20). Overall, the ceramic assemblage is comparable to those of other Median sites both in the west such as Nush-i Jan (Stronach *et al.* 1978), Godin (Young & Levine 1974, Gopnik *et al.* 2011), and Baba Jan (Goff 1985) and also in the east such as Ozbaki (Madjidzadeh 2010), Zarbolagh (Malekzadeh *et al.* 2014), and Sialk (Fahimi 2003, 2004, 2005).

## Conclusions

In addition to Nush-i Jan, Godin, Baba Jan and Ozbaki, we now know Gūnespān as a new Median site with distinctive mud-brick structures. As mentioned above, the Median complex consists of four rectangular rooms in the south and one more irregular room in the north, all surrounded by an oval fortification wall in the final phase. Such rectangular rooms are usually described as storage rooms or magazines in Median architecture in western Iran (Pl. 21), and they show a similar plan to those found at key sites of this period such as Nush-i Jan (Stronach & Roaf 2007: 107), Godin (Gopnik 2011: 310-11), Mūsh Tappeh (Motarjem 2013: fig. 3) and Ozbaki (Madjidzadeh 2010: fig. 26) within the present borders of Iran and Ulug Depe (Boucharlat 2005: 503, fig. 3; Lecomte 2007a: 107, fig 9; Lecomte 2007b: 2017, fig 12; Xin & Lecomte 2012: fig. 2 on p. 316) and Gubba (Fujii 1981: 28, fig. 10) outside Iran (Roaf 2008). One of the most important basic questions concerns the function of these storage-like rooms; why would both small and large Median mud-brick structures need such storage? In other words, what kind of socio-economic mechanisms would be indicated by these storage facilities in the Median territory? These questions deserve to be taken into account in future investigations.

Lastly, we note the individual characteristics of the Gūnespān complex. None of the rooms indicate any intentional filling, unlike what is seen in Nush-i Jan (Stronach & Roaf 2007: 208-209). This could be taken as an indicator of functional differences between the two sites. Additionally, no signs of burning or of warfare are seen, as compared to Baba Jan where ashy layers discovered there have led to the belief that it was abandoned as the result of a military attack (Goff 1978: 40-42). The inner deposits of

the rooms mostly consist of soil, sometimes with mud-brick collapse (Pl. 22). This could indicate a gradual abandonment and subsequent erosion of the walls through time, as is also seen at Godin II (Gopnik 2011: 314-322).

It should be said that as during the salvage project less than half of the site has been excavated, the nature of the unexcavated area is not certain. Other Median sites such as Nush-i Jan, Baba Jan and Godin had their own functions. The first was a religious complex, while both the second and third may have had residential, administrative and military functions. Unlike these Median sites, however, the archaeological assemblages of Gūnespān have been discovered but then have disappeared under the waters of the dam reservoir (Pl. 23). As a result, this site has been lost forever and our information from the site remains mostly limited to what has been discussed above.

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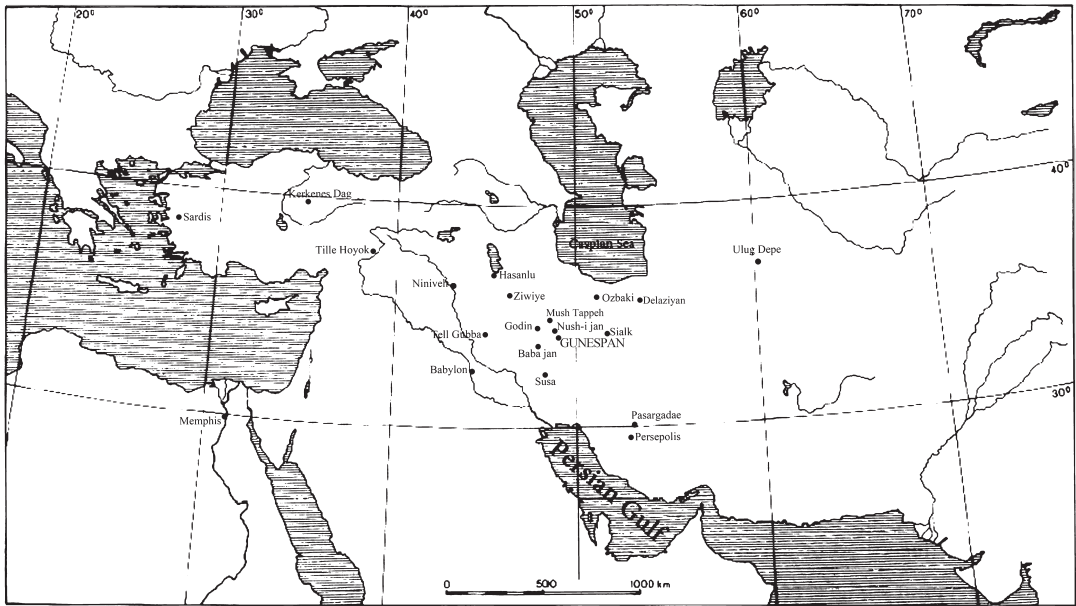
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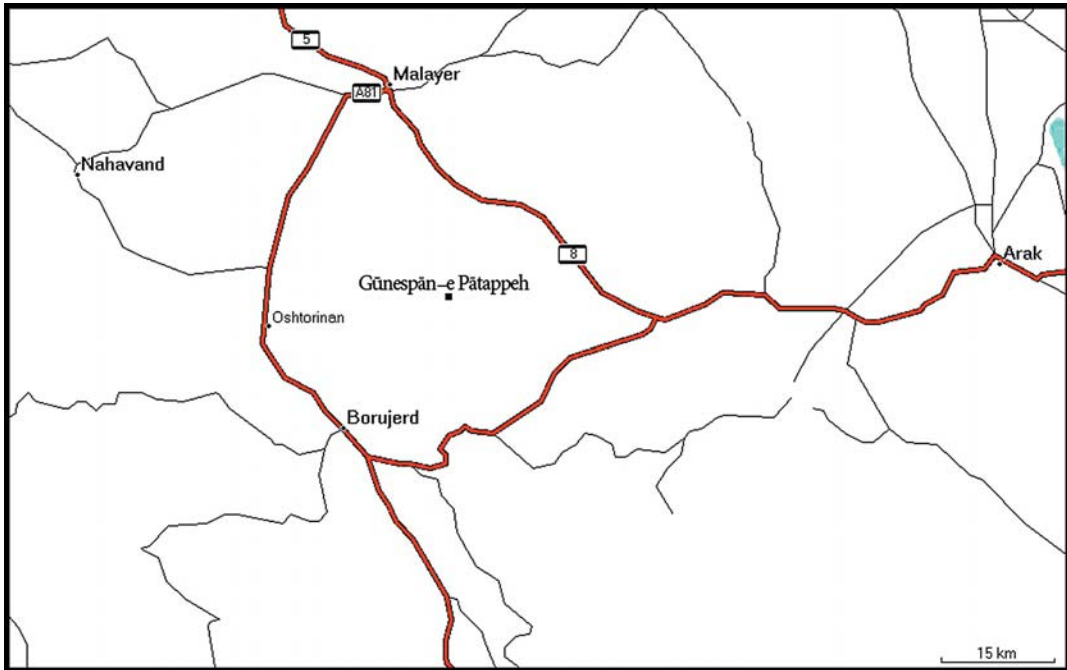
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Pl. 1a. Location of Güneşpân in relation to other Iron Age sites (after Stronach & Roaf 2007: fig. 1.1).



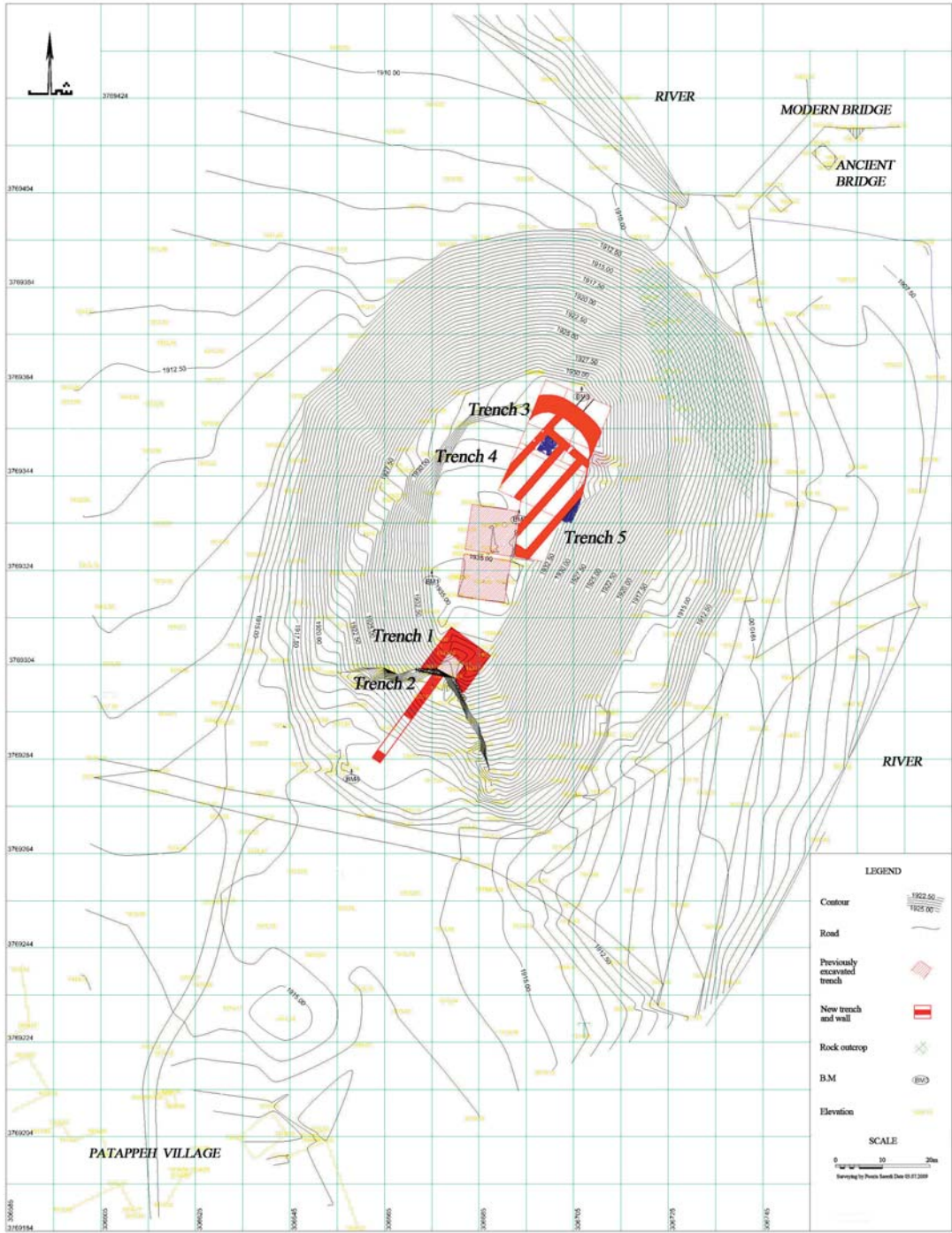
Pl. 1b. Location of Güneşpân near Malayer in the Central Zagros.



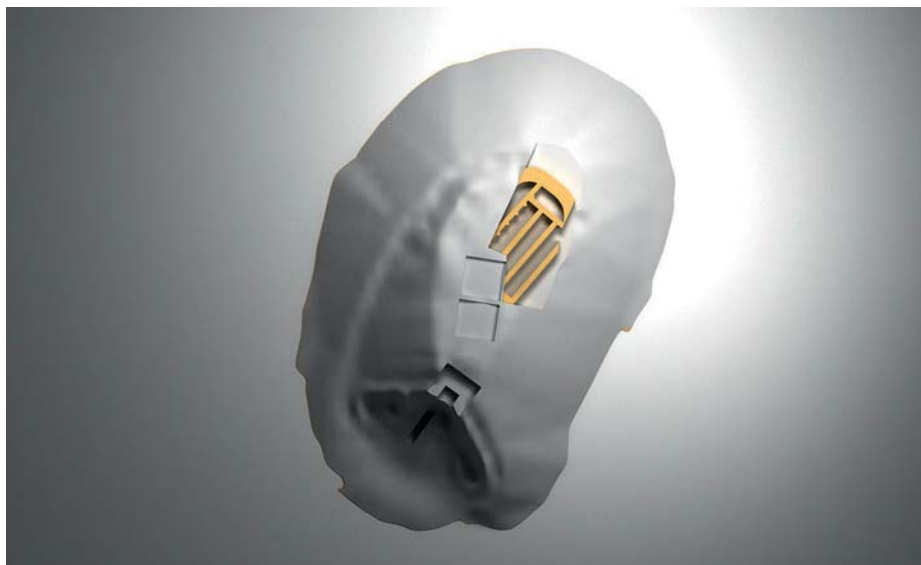
Pl. 2a. General view of Gūnēspān before the archaeological investigations.



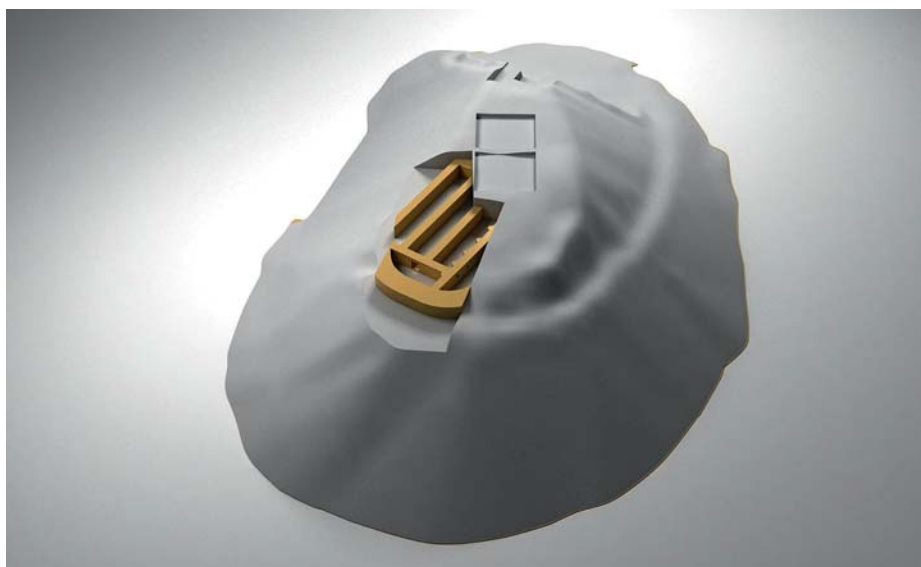
Pl. 2b. General view of Gūnēspān from the top of the Kalān Dam.



Pl. 3. Topographic map of Güneşpān and the location of the trenches excavated in the fourth and fifth seasons.

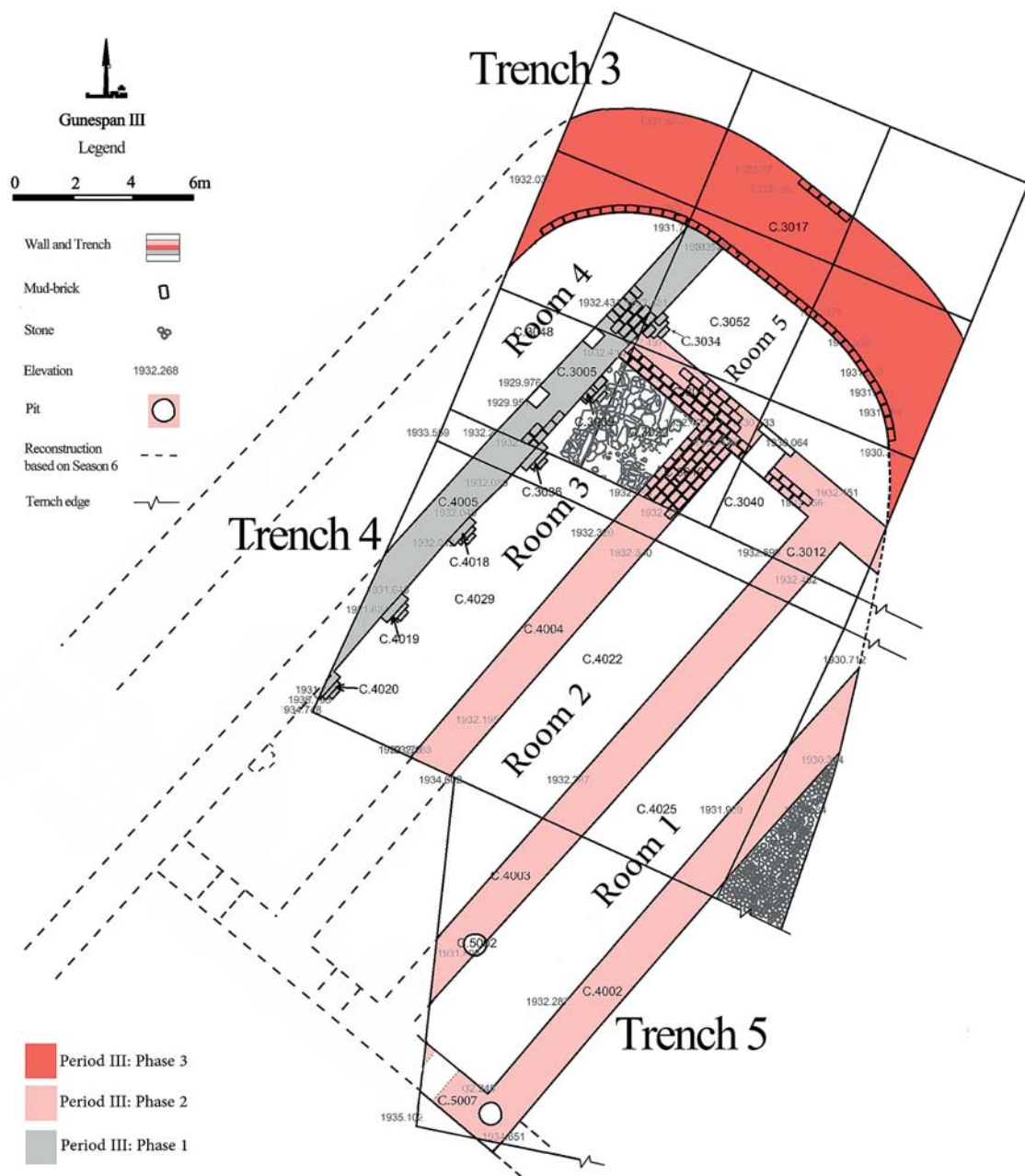


Pl. 4a. 3D map of Gūnespān showing architectural features of Iron Age III date, vertical view.

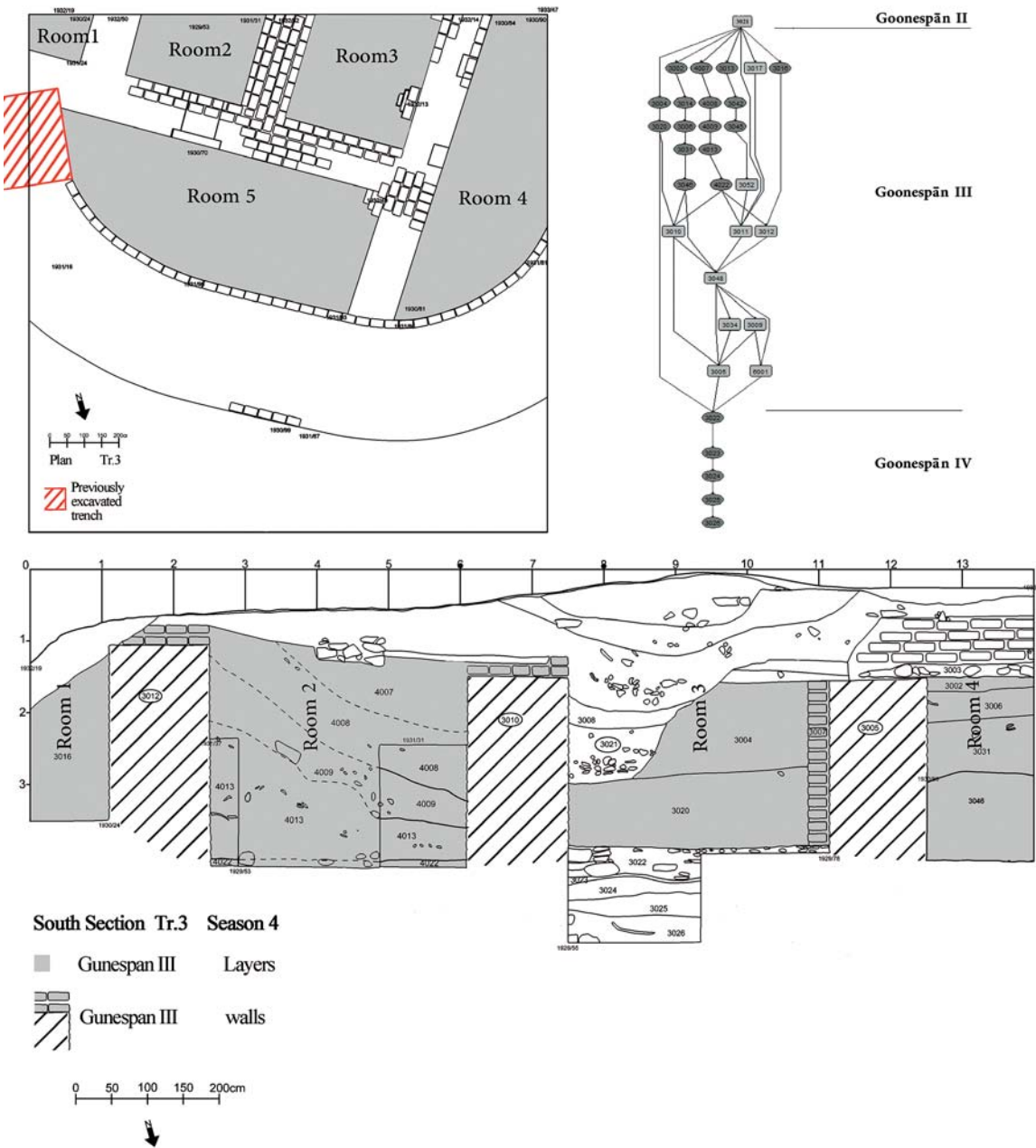


Pl. 4b. 3D map of Gūnespān showing architectural features of Iron Age III date, viewed from the north.





Pl. 5. Plan of Günespān III, after five seasons of excavations with reconstructions based on the results of the sixth season.



Pl. 6. Plan and south section of Trench 3, showing the Iron Age III remains.





Pl. 7a. Pilasters found in Trench 4 on the west wall of Room 3



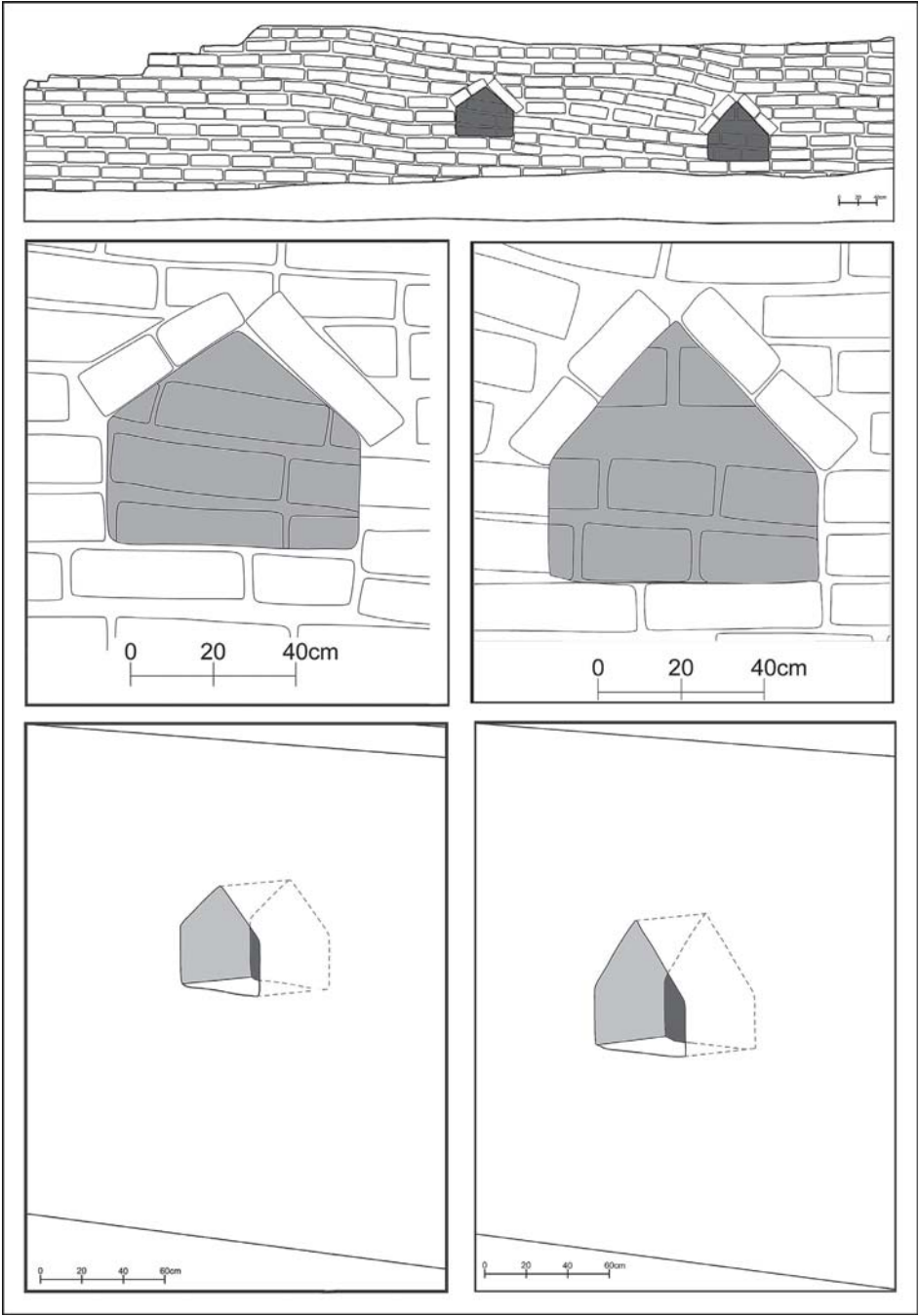
Pl. 7c. Room 3 and its pilasters attached to the wall in Trench 4.



Pl. 7b. Detailed view of the northern pilaster in Trench 4.



Pl. 8. Room 4 and detailed views of its niches.



Pl. 9. Detailed drawings of niches found in Room 4.





Pl. 10a. Looking west over the Rooms 3 and 4 towards the west wall of Room 4 and its ventilation slots.



Pl. 10b. Details of the ventilation slots in the west wall of Room 4.



Pl. 11a. Room 5 at the end of the fourth season of excavations.



Pl. 11b. Room 5 at the end of the fifth season of excavations and after the removal of the floor.





Pl. 12. Doorway between Rooms 5 and 2, viewed from Room 5.

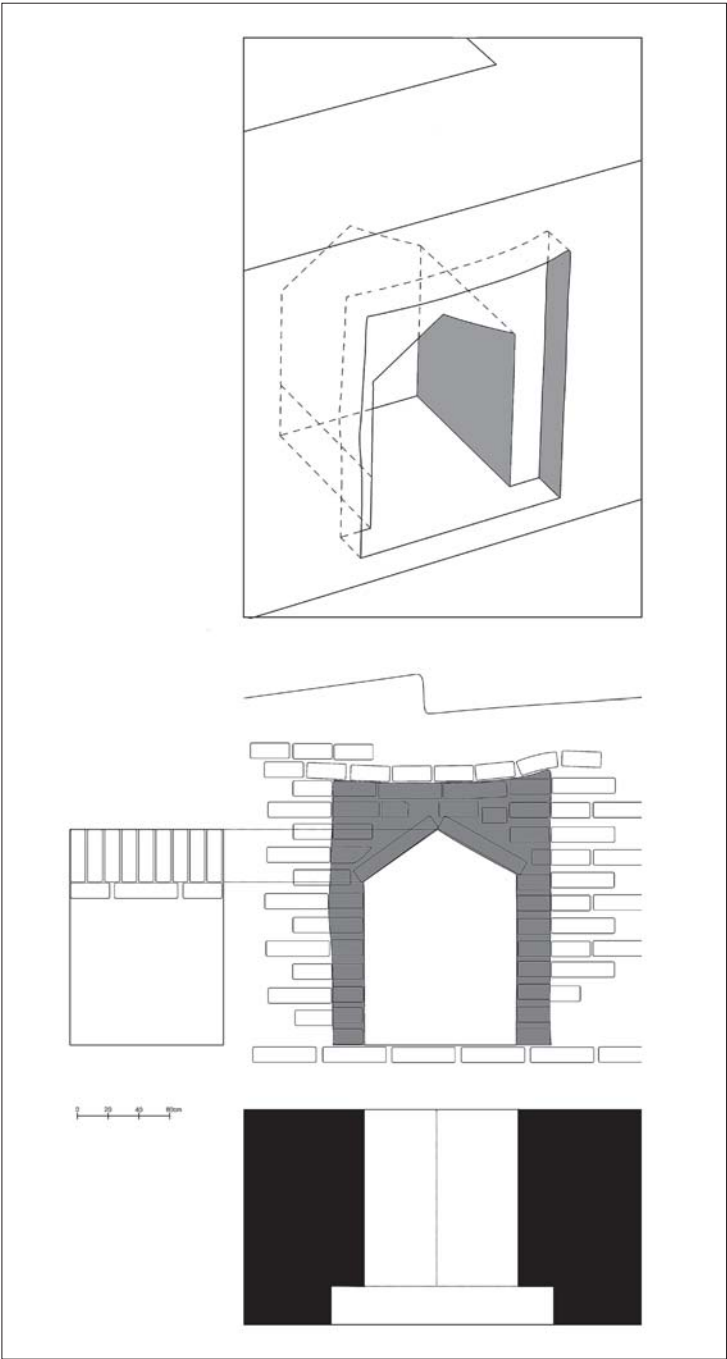




Pl. 13. Doorway between Rooms 5 and 2, viewed from Room 2.



Pl. 14. The arch of the doorway between Rooms 5 and 2.

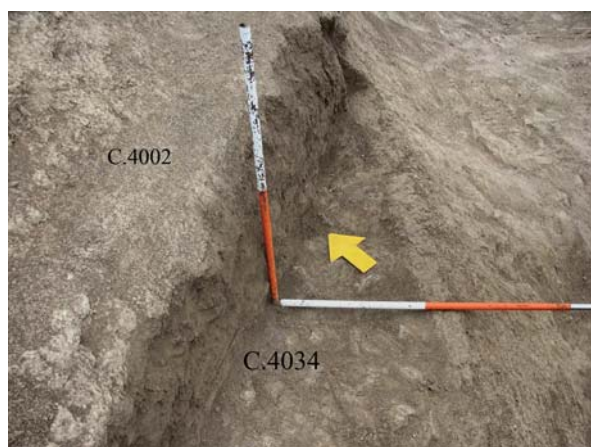


Pl. 15. Plan and section of the doorway between Rooms 5 and 2.





Pl. 16a. The oval wall in the north part of Trench 3 and the earlier walls of Rooms, 2, 3, and 4,



Pl. 16b. Filling between the oval wall and Room 1.

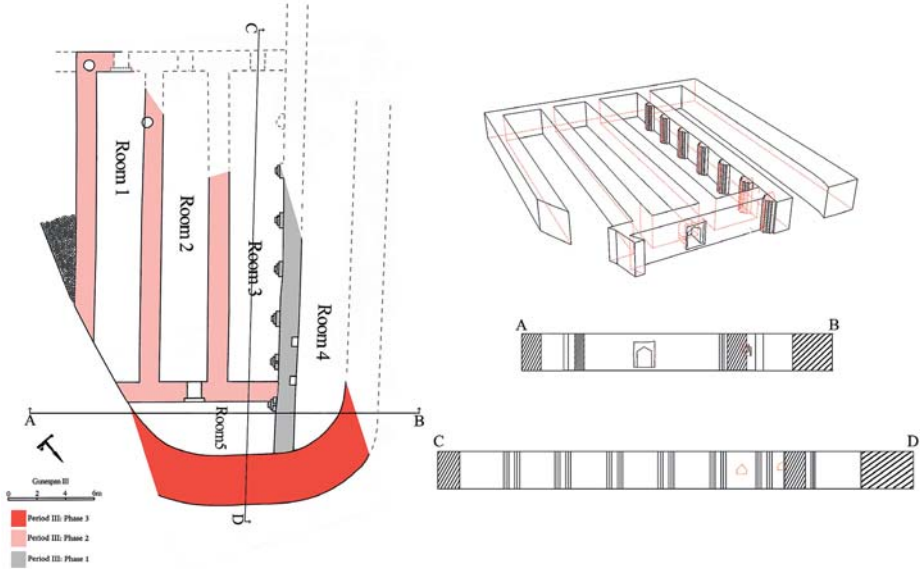


Pl. 16c. Stone infrastructure for Iron Age III structures at the northern end of Room 3.

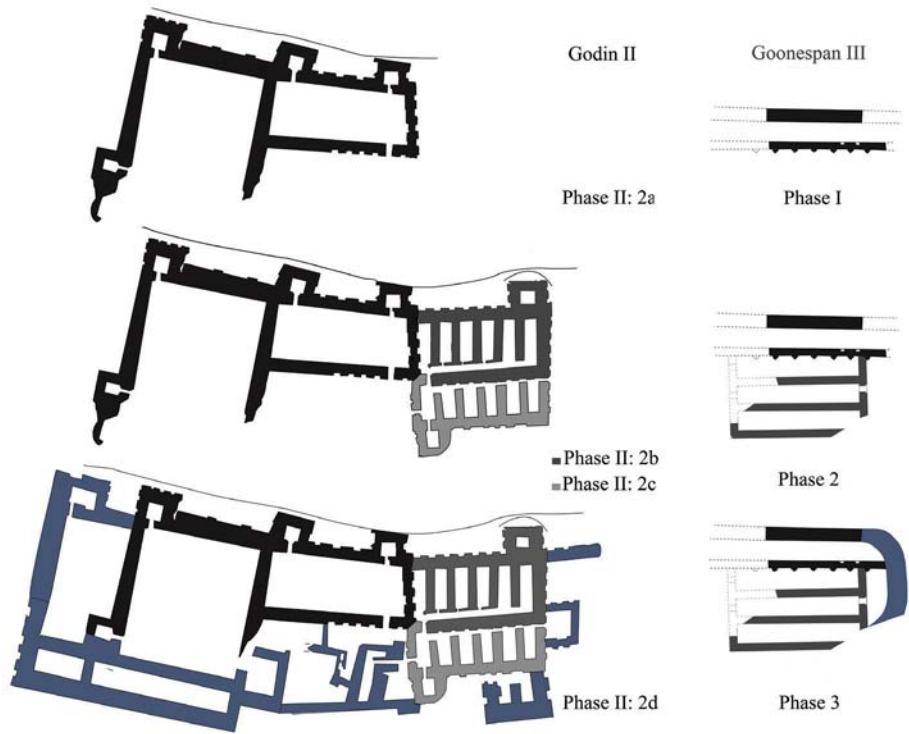


Pl. 17. Stone infrastructure under the Iron Age III structures in the south part of the mound.





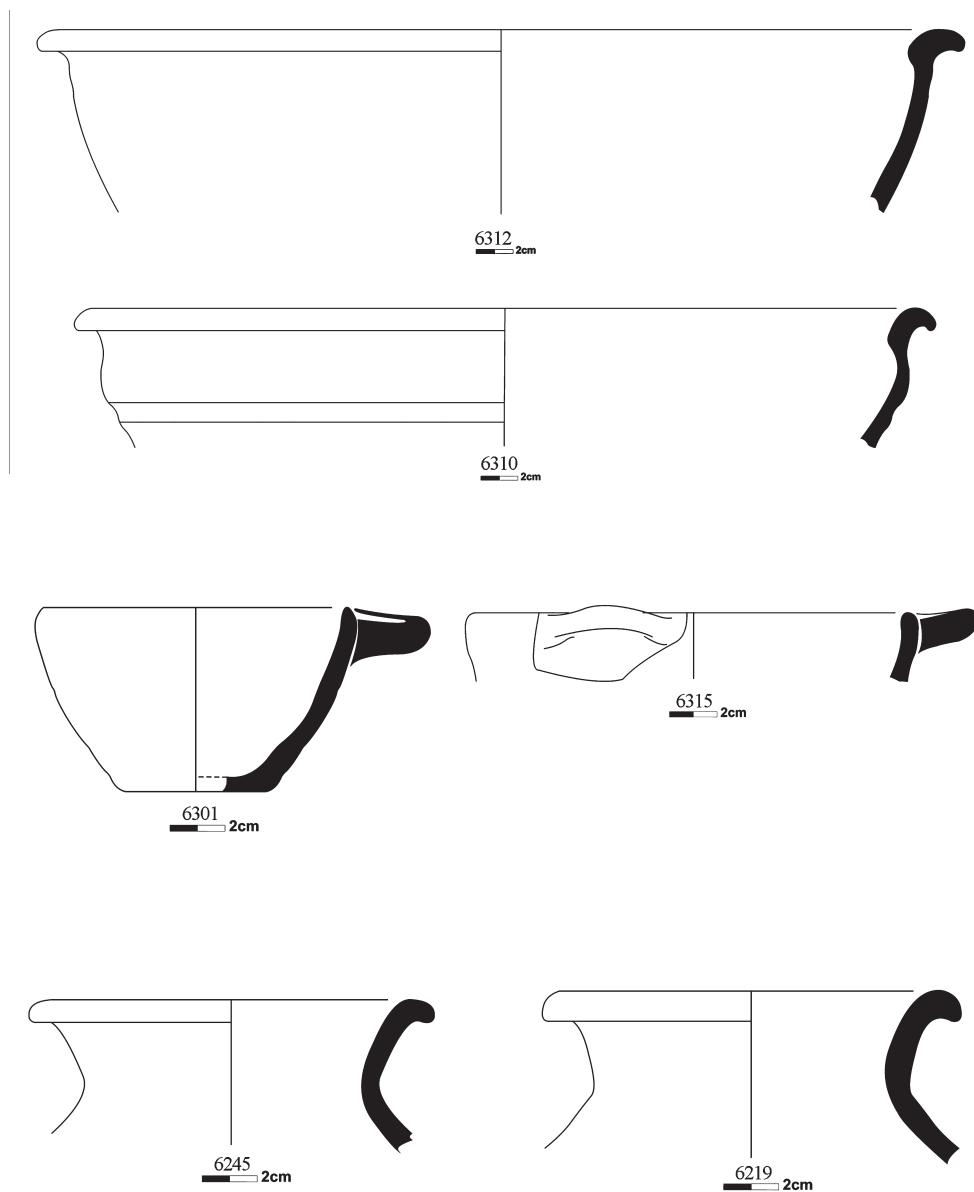
Pl. 18a. Plan, section and axonometric plan of Iron Age III structures showing the relationship between Phases 2 and 3.



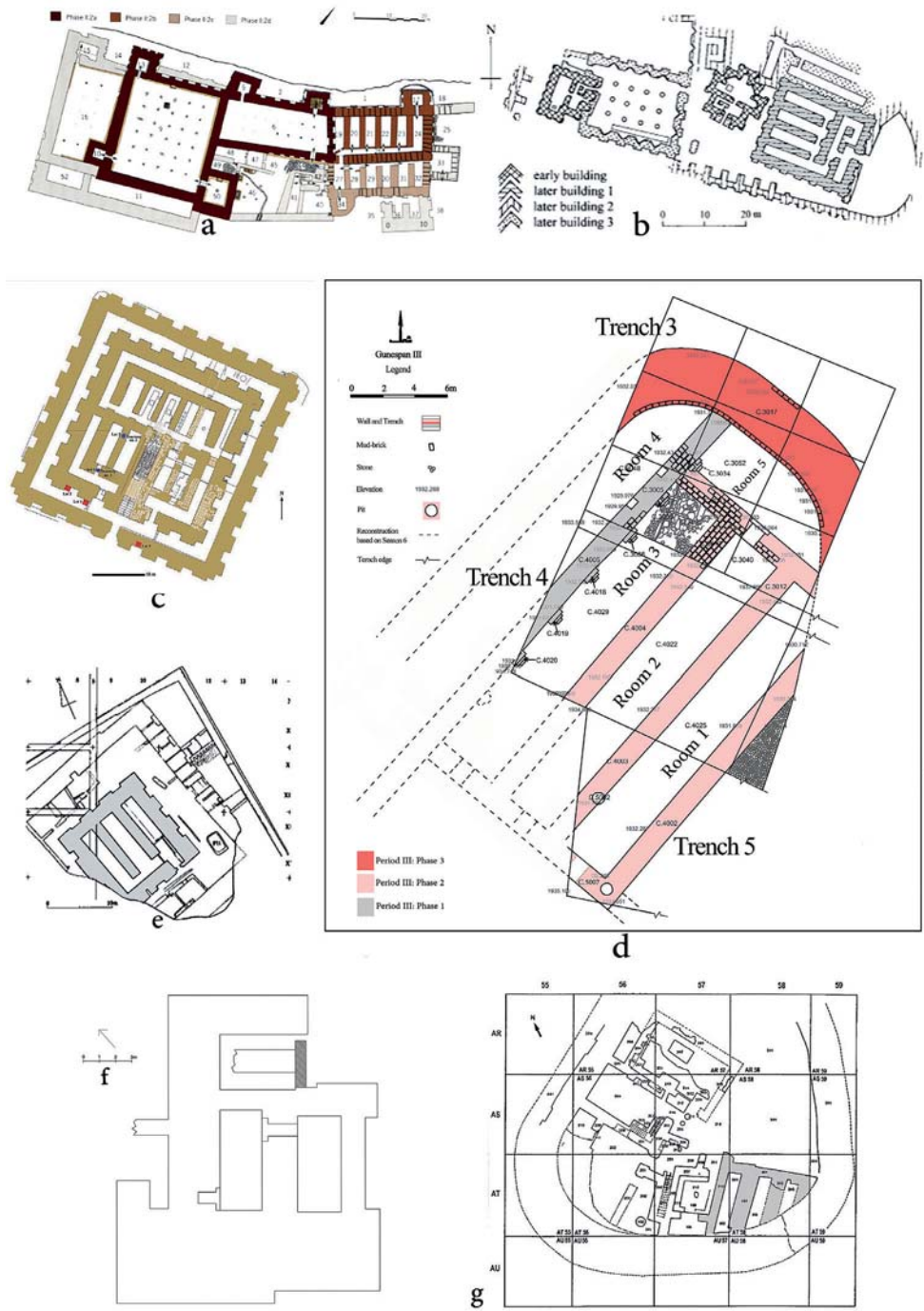
Pl. 18b. Architectural phasing of Godin II compared with that of Günespān III (The details of plans may not be correct).



Pl. 19. Selected pottery samples from Iron Age III deposits.



Pl. 20. Drawings of selected pottery samples from Iron Age III deposits.



Pl. 21. Architectural structures identified as storage rooms in various Iron Age III sites, a: Godin (Gopnik 2011), b: Nush-i Jan (Roaf 1995), c: Ulug Depe (Xin & Lecomte 2012), d: Güneşpân (Naseri 2009a/b), e: Tell Gubba (Fujii 1981), f: Moush Tappeh (Motarjem 2013), g: Ozbaki (Madjidzadeh 2010).





Pl. 22. Soil deposits and mud-brick collapse of Iron Age III structures at Trench 3.





Pl. 23abc: Satellite images showing Güneşpân after the construction of the Kalân Dam in the Malayer plain after the sixth season, a: General view, b: Detailed view, c: Detailed view with reconstructed sketch of wall lines.



d. The end of Güneşpân-e Pâtappéh (Photo: Mr. Mostafa Seyfi).

## ELAMITE *SUKU*-<sup>1</sup>

BY

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**Abstract:** In this article a new study of the Elamite lexeme *suku*-, which is attested from the Middle Elamite period onwards, is conducted. It is suggested that the meaning of the word was not the same in official and documentary contexts.

**Keywords:** Elamite language; lexicology

Elamite lexicology is a difficult topic to study since Elamite is an isolated language and there is accordingly little comparative material from other languages to help the modern scholar. The basis for our knowledge of the Elamite lexicon is the various Achaemenid Royal Inscriptions that are drafted in three languages (Akkadian, Old Persian and Elamite). Note, however, that the Middle Elamite texts MDP 41 31 (Elamite) and 32 (Akkadian) seem to be translations of each other (Steve 1967: 69) and accordingly help the scholar in his or her study of the Elamite lexicon.

For the words not clarified by these bi- or trilingual texts contextual study is required. One of such lexemes is *suku*-, occurring in texts dated to the Middle Elamite, Neo-Elamite and Achaemenid Elamite periods.

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<sup>1</sup> This research has been funded by the Interuniversity Attraction Poles Programme initiated by the Belgian Science Policy Office (IAP VII/14: “Greater Mesopotamia: Reconstruction of its Environment and History”).

<sup>2</sup> Please note the following codes for the Elamite texts.  
Fort. = Persepolis Fortification tablets, mostly unpublished, cited from draft editions by M.W. Stolper, some available via the Online Cultural and Historical Research Environment (<https://ochre.uchicago.edu/>); images of some available via InscriptiFact (<http://www.inscriptifact.com/>).  
NN = Persepolis Fortification texts in draft editions by R. T. Hallock, cited from collated and corrected editions by W.F.M. Henkelman, some available via the Online Cultural and Historical Research Environment (<https://ochre.uchicago.edu/>); images of some available via InscriptiFact (<http://www.inscriptifact.com/>).  
PF = Persepolis Fortification texts published in Hallock 1969.

The Middle Elamite attestations appear in similar contexts with *hiš(ume)* “(my) name” as direct object. EKI 9IIIb viii has a phrase *ak hiš Untaš-Napirišame sukušak imeni ahar tanra* “(A king, enemy or allied”, who,) after he *suku*-ed the name of Untaš-Napiriša, will place here his own (name). In EKI 16 iii, Napir-asu, Untaš-Napiriša’s wife, warns “he who *suku*-es my name” (*akka sukunra hišumu*). The verb is also four times attested in inscriptions from Shilhak-Inshuhsinak I (c. 1150-1120 BC). In EKI 45 the word occurs two times: *akka melkan ak sukunra ak hiše duhe ahar tattalunra* “He who damages and *suku*-es (my name) and inscribes here his own name” (§ 13) and *sugir ... taha humaş ak sukunra* “A king who ... after he seized what I have placed (here), *suku*-es (it)” (§ 18). The third attestation can be found in EKI 48b:63, where one can read *hišume liku aha tah sukuš ak aphe ahar tanri* “(Who) has *suku*-ed my name which I have placed here as a gift, and places his title here”. The last attestation occurs in EKI 50 I, where the damaged phrase reads *ak murenra ak sukunra* “(He who) grabs as well as *suku*-es [my statue/inscription/name]”.

Most authors agree on the meaning of *suku*- in the Middle Elamite texts, which should be something like “scratch out, obliterate; erase; remove” (Scheil 1904: 2; Bork 1933: 30; Friedrich 1949: 21; Labat 1951: 38; König 1965: 70 n.3; Hallock 1973: 350; Grillot 1973: 149; Hinz & Koch 1987: 1101-1102). Such a meaning seems to be corroborated by the use of the Akkadian verb *pašātu* “obliterate” in very similar contexts and with *šumu* “name” as direct object (e.g. in MDP 11 89B:3-4)<sup>3</sup>.

A contested attestation is *sukma imme lupen* in MDP 41 2:7. According to Steve (1967: 69) it is the conjugation *Im* verbal noun of *suku*- “erase”, whereas Hinz & Koch (1987: 1105) consider it a word meaning “in dust”.

In Neo-Elamite texts forms of *suku*- are attested two times. In EKI 75:23 (cf. Hinz 1962: 111) the person who damages the relief and its inscriptions is warned: “may he be erased” (*sukukna*). A second attestation, *sukumanra*, is to be found in the Persepolis Bronze Plaque, again in a curse formula: *sah Šašum elhalaera Kesatirra napiruri i zima siraha sukumanra* “(He who) obliterates the bronze tablet, which I had hung up before Šašum, the *elhalaera*, the Gisatian, my goddess” (Gian Pietro

<sup>3</sup> Scheil (1911: 14), who re-translates the Akkadian text into Elamite, also uses the Elamite verb *suku*- to translate the Akkadian verb *pašātu*- (line 1: *sukunra* - *ipiššītu*; line 4: *sukunra* - *ipiššīma*).

Basello, pers. comm. 05/09/2014). Here too, a meaning “to obliterate” is possible, even when the direct object is no longer *hiš* “name”.

Finally, there are various Achaemenid attestations of *suku-*. All of them are found in the Persepolis Fortification Archive and appear in an administrative context. This has caused some confusion among the authors, which on its turn has led to different translations for these forms. The first editor of the Fortification Texts, Hallock (1969: 501) proposed “to loan”, while Hinz (1970: 439) pleads for “to cancel, to wipe off, to write off”. According to Koch (1981: 238 n.19), the verb *suku-* must mean “to request”.

Let us have a look at the attestations themselves. Two forms of *suku-* are attested, the passive participle singular *sukuk* (written *su-ku-ka<sub>4</sub>* and *zī-ku-ka<sub>4</sub>*) and the plural form *sukup* (written *su-ku-ib-ba*). The latter form occurs seven times in a group of seven letter orders (Hallock’s category T). Five of them are sent by the high-ranked official Ziššawiš to various officials stationed in various places: Kap[ ]<sup>4</sup> (Fort. 2350-105), Mušakkaš (NN 1880), Narezzaš (PF 1825), Randuš (NN 0191) and Šala (NN 1590). The sixth letter (NN 0363) is sent by the high-ranked official Parnakka to a person whose base is not mentioned. The seventh letter (PF 1825) is sent by a person named Abbateya to Šatipartanna.

All these letters concern rations for workers that were apparently treasury workers in various places (e.g. Randuš [Fort. 2350-105, NN 0191]), but are now stonemasons at Persepolis. The phrases expressing this transfer can be divided in two types:

- (1) *Kapnuškip* (GN) *Šuddayauda šaramanna sukupa HAR-tukkip Barša Abbateya šaramanna* “Treasury workers, under responsibility of Šuddayauda, *sukup*, (now) stonemasons at Persepolis, under responsibility of Abbateya” (Fort. 2350-105; PF 1825).
- (2) *Kapnuškip* (GN) *Šuddayaudamar sukupa HAR-tukkip Barša Abbateya šaramanna* “Treasury workers, *sukup* by Šuddayauda, (now) stonemasons at Persepolis, under responsibility of Abbateya” (NN 0191, 0363, 1590, 1880; PF 1852).

<sup>4</sup> A search in Hinz & Koch 1987 and in Vallat 1993 has yielded the following possible place names: Kabbašna (*Ka<sub>4</sub>-ab-ba-iš-na*) or Kaptarriš (*Ka<sub>4</sub>-ap-tar-ri-iš*). Other place names beginning with Kap- are Kapaš, Kapipukaš, Kaparapiš, Kapardu; Kapišda and Kapranan, but none of these toponyms is attested with *Ka<sub>4</sub>-ap-*.

The texts make up a particular group within the Fortification Archive. The same persons are involved and the formulas used are also similar. Apparently some groups of treasury workers, based at various places, are transferred to Persepolis, where they have to work as stonemasons. The two officials responsible for their rations are always Šuddayauda for the men as treasury workers and Abbateya for the men as stonemasons in Persepolis. As already mentioned, one letter was sent by Parnakka. It is also Abbateya who writes PF 1852 to some lower official.

Šuddayauda is also responsible for the transfer of these people to Persepolis. He actually *suku*-es them to Persepolis. In this sense, it is understandable that Henkelman (2008: 104 and 544) translates *suku*- by “to remove”. The workers were removed from their original basis to Persepolis.

In any case, Hallock’s and Koch’s translations “to loan” and “to request” have become impossible, but Hinz’s proposal “to delete, write off administratively” does not convince either.

It is my opinion that the lexeme *suku*- had a slightly modified meaning in the Achaemenid administration. The texts indicate that the workers are moved from a certain settlement to Persepolis. Therefore I would suggest a meaning “to transfer”.

Nevertheless, this new proposal is based on a single group of texts. Anyhow, the Achaemenid text corpus also has some other attestations, where a translation “transfer” is equally possible and even preferable. The other form of *suku*-, *sukuka*, is attested nine times in various contexts. In five texts (NN 0864, 0869; PF 0531, 0591, 0592) the context is identical: *sapsap (hupema) appa Manzanana sukuka* “(This is) a copy which has been transferred by Manzana”. The other attestations are:

- (1) NN 0775: *kurtaš galli makip appa Manzana zikuka Kursamuš galluma tušta* “workers, subsisting on rations and which Manzana has transferred to Kursamuš, received barley as rations”.
- (2) NN 0269: *anka kušukummar tarmu sukukana* “(PN received beer) when the emmer had been transferred from the *kušukum*”.
- (3) NN 2482: PN has received 6 *marri* of beer which he used for libations at six *kušukum*. He received it *anka haduš tarmuna sukukana* “After the revenue in emmer had been transferred”.
- (4) PF 770: PN has received 6 jars of beer which he used for libations at six *kušukum*. He received it *naka*<sup>5</sup> ŠE.BAR *kušukummar sukukana*

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<sup>5</sup> *Naka* must be seen as a variant of *anka* “when, after” (Henkelman 2008: 408 and 542).



“When the barley had been transferred from the *kušukum*”. Hallock (1969: 229) leaves the passage uncommented.

Interestingly, the word *kušukum*, a locale where certain offerings were made as well as the type of offering itself (Henkelman 2008: 401), is mentioned in the three latter texts.

As a matter of fact, all Achaemenid attestations of *suku-* are followed by the particle *-a*, which usually indicates some kind of subordination (Grillot 1970: 216-218; Grillot-Susini 2008: 94-96; Labat 1970: 237; Khacikyan 1998: 50; Stolper 2004: 82; Tavernier 2011: 337-338). In Achaemenid Elamite, this verb was sometimes followed by the suffix *-ma* or *-na*.

All but one attestations of *sukuka* occur in Henkelman’s type 2a subordinating clauses (Henkelman 2008: 408). Such clauses are introduced by *anka* and have an inflected past conjugation I or II verbal form, which is followed by the suffix *-na*. The attestations of *sukup* are not introduced by a subordinating conjunction.

Returning to the group of seven PFT letter orders mentioned before, it is now possible to propose modified translations for the two types of *suku-* phrases in these seven texts, taking into account the notion of subordination.

- (1) *Kapnuškip* (GN) *Šuddayauda šaramanna sukupa HAR-tukkip Barša Abbateya šaramanna* “Treasury workers (at GN), that, after having been transferred under responsibility of Šuddayauda, are (now) stonemasons at Persepolis, under responsibility of Abbateya” (Fort. 2350-105; PF 1825).
- (2) *Kapnuškip* (GN) *Šuddayaudamar sukupa HAR-tukkip Barša Abbateya šaramanna* “Treasury workers (at GN), that, after having been transferred by Šuddayauda, are (now) stonemasons at Persepolis, under responsibility of Abbateya” (NN 0191, 0363, 1590, 1880; 1852).

In addition, the orthographic variation between *sukuka* and *zikuka* is highly interesting, at least from a phonological point of view. The variation *s/z* is often attested in Elamite (Tavernier 2010: 1072) and probably points to an alveolar affricate */c/* or, but less probably, an alveolar fricative */s’/* (Tavernier 2010: 1075-1076). The phonological realisation of the lexeme discussed here is as a result of this, most likely */cuku/*.

In sum, the Elamite verb *suku-* has a clear meaning “to obliterate, remove” in its Middle Elamite and Neo-Elamite attestations. It should hereby be noted that all these attestations are found in a (royal) inscrip-tional official context.

In the Achaemenid period, where the verb is only attested in purely administrative contexts, the meaning “to obliterate, remove” is no longer tenable. The meaning of *suku-* in the Achaemenid administrative context is rather “to transfer”. This translation fits all the contexts in which the lexeme *suku-* occurs in the Achaemenid text corpus.

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## ATHENAEUS, CLEARCHUS AND THE DRESS OF THE PERSIAN APPLE BEARERS

BY

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**Abstract:** This article examines Clearchus of Soli's reference to the effeminate dress and equipment of the Persian *μηλοφόροι* or Apple Bearers, the infantry guard of the Great King, as preserved by Athenaeus in his *Deipnosophistae*. We argue that Athenaeus' description of the *μηλοφόροι* being deliberately dressed in Median fashion so as to taunt the Medes is likely to be a misinterpretation of Clearchus' original text. In agreement with recent evaluations of Athenaeus, we therefore suggest that his rendition of Clearchus' original text cannot be accepted at face value, and that the *μηλοφόροι* were dressed and equipped in a luxurious fashion so as to conform with the standard Near Eastern visual language of majesty and power.

**Keywords:** Medes, Persians, Apple Bearers, Athenaeus, Clearchus of Soli

Among the many curious details surrounding the Achaememid military is the assertion, found in a fragment of Clearchus of Soli (49 Wehrli = *FHG* II 304), transmitted by Athenaeus (12.514d) in his wide-ranging *Deipnosophistae* (late second or early third century A.D.), that the *μηλοφόροι* or Apple Bearers lived in a luxurious manner in a deliberate attempt to recall the *τρυφή* or softness, often understood in connection with effeminate luxury, of the now-subjugated Medes and their court<sup>1</sup>. Now, it is well recognized that these soldiers were the most elite of the

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<sup>1</sup> The words *τρυφάω*/*τρυφή* and their derivatives are often used in classical sources in connection with effeminate luxury and soft living, perceived as characteristic of the peoples of the East, including Ionian Greeks; see, e.g., Eur. *Bacch.* 969-970; *Phoen.* 1491; *Or.* 1113; Pl. *Alc.* 1.122c; *Gr.* 492c; *Leg.* 637e, 900e-901a; *Resp.* 590b; see also Ar. *Lys.* 387 and 405; *Eccl.* 974; *Nub.* 48; *Vesp.* 1455. Isocrates (*Paneg.* 149-151) also discusses effeminacy resulting from the Persian's interest in luxury. Furthermore, see Gorman and Gorman 2007 and 2010: *passim*, with more references to Athenaeus and his use of the notion of hubristic luxury, which he (according to the authors) imposes on Clearchus' *Περὶ Βίον*. On the Median court, see Asheri 1989: 328-329, who emphasizes that the Medes imitated many of the court customs of the Assyrians and were then, in turn, imitated by

Great King's infantry, and also guarded the sovereign at his court, as well as in the field. Their commander is also generally regarded as the most important chiliarch in the land, more so since he is said to have controlled access to the king<sup>2</sup>. The guard's supposed emulation of the Medes may have extended, as postulated recently by Charles (2012: 261), to the adoption of the characteristic apple- or pomegranate-shape butts affixed to the base of their spears. Clearchus' *floruit* was around 320 B.C. and was therefore close to the death of Alexander the Great, who is also specifically mentioned in a number of ancient sources as having rejected the Median royal dress, although he was keen to adopt a magnificent hybrid of Achaemenid-Persian costume in his effort to impress his Iranian subjects<sup>3</sup>. It is worth presenting the relevant passage of Athenaeus in full:

Κλέαρχος δὲ ὁ Σολεὺς ἐν τετάρτῳ Βίων προειπὼν περὶ τῆς Μήδων τρυφῆς καὶ ὅτι διὰ ταύτην πολλοὺς εὐνουχίσαιεν τῶν περικτιόνων, ἐπιφέρει καὶ τὴν παρὰ Μήδων γενέσθαι Πέρσαις μηλοφορίαν μὴ μόνων ὧν ἔπαθον τιμωρίαν, ἀλλὰ καὶ τῆς τῶν δορυφορούντων τρυφῆς εἰς ὅσον ἦλθον ἀνανδρίας ὑπόμνημα· δύναται γάρ, ὥς ἔοικεν, ἡ παράκαιρος ἅμα καὶ μάταιος αὐτῶν περὶ τὸν βίον τρυφή καὶ τοὺς ταῖς λόγχαις καθωπλισμένους ἀγύρτας ἀποφαίνειν.

Clearchus of Soli in Book IV of the *Lives* begins by describing the Medes' addiction to luxury and the fact that this motivated them to turn many of their neighbours into eunuchs, and then goes on to say that the Persians got the practice of 'apple-bearing' [μηλοφορία] from the Medes, not just as revenge for what had been done to them, but also as a reminder of the bodyguards' addiction to luxury and of

the Persians; see also Gabelmann 1984: 23-31. On the μηλοφόροι, see especially Charles 2011: 114-133, with reference to most of the previous literature on this unit.

<sup>2</sup> There has been some controversy relating to which chiliarch (literally, "leader of a thousand men") was *the* Chiliarch, which official is regarded as being one of the most important men in the Empire. The prevailing view is summarized by Collins 2001: 271 and id. 2012a: 162-163; see also Keaveney 2010: 499, who, building on his discussion at id. 2003: 119-129, likewise asserts that there was only one chiliarch *par excellence*. On controlling access to the king, see Diod. Sic. 11.69.1, where the commander of the δορυφόροι, which unit is presumably the μηλοφόροι, is assumed to be the official with most influence over the king; see also Plut. *Them.* 27.2.

<sup>3</sup> Collins 2012b: 372-373, citing, among others, Eratosthenes of Cyrene (*FGrH* 241 F 30 = Plut. *Mor.* 329f-330a), Plutarch (*Alex.* 45.2) and Diodorus Siculus (17.77.5).



what cowards they had become, because their inopportune and foolish addiction to luxury in the way they lived was, apparently, capable of converting even men armed with spears into eunuch priests<sup>4</sup>.

From this, it would appear that the *μηλοφόροι* lived in the luxurious manner of the Medes, so that one might reasonably extrapolate that they were dressed in their opulent attire, and that their characteristic spears, with golden ‘apples’ at their butts, as described by Herodotus in his *Histories* (7.41.2: *μηλα*)<sup>5</sup>, was a Median invention, and not a Persian one.

Throughout history, elite military units have sometimes taken on, as a mark of respect, the trappings of the glorious vanquished, mainly so as to recall the bravery of these units in battle, and the difficulty experienced in overcoming them. One remembers, for example, the adoption of metal cuirasses by the British Life Guards to honour the bravery of the French cuirassiers defeated at Waterloo, and the engagement at Quatre Bras in particular, in 1815; or the use of flamboyant oriental dress by Napoleon’s *Escadron de Mamalukes*, which recalled the equipment of an ethnic group whom he had defeated in Egypt in 1798, at the Battle of the Pyramids<sup>6</sup>. Closer to our period, one might remember the adoption of the *gladius hispaniensis* (or *hispanicus*) by the legionaries of Rome, for the Iberians, who used similarly short double-edged swords, had proved so doughty in war, and their weapons so effective, that the Romans sought to emulate their distinctive equipment. There are, of course, many other examples.

But it is difficult to recall the case of an elite military unit being equipped so as to recall the effeminacy and cowardice, rather than the bravery, of the defeated. Even if we accept Curtius’ reading of Alexander’s adoption of oriental dress as a public display of war spoils (6.6.5)<sup>7</sup>, an ideology which the Persians may also have used and applied to the dress code and equipment of the *μηλοφόροι*, ancient multi-ethnic empires tended to emphasize

<sup>4</sup> Translation of Olson 2010: 23.

<sup>5</sup> These men, though not specifically called *μηλοφόροι*, are described as being the “spearmen” (*αἰχμοφόροι*) positioned closest to the Great King in Xerxes’ army, which would suggest that they are, indeed, the infantry unit of interest to us.

<sup>6</sup> This squadron, which was attached to the Guard Chasseurs à Cheval, was originally composed of Mamluks. But as these soldiers were killed or injured, they were replaced by men of other nationalities, including French cavalrymen.

<sup>7</sup> Collins 2012b: 374-375, with nn. 18-20.

the figure of the king as a uniting, supra-ethnic entity rather than an aggressive conqueror<sup>8</sup>. Therefore, Clearchus' reference clearly warrants some explanation, more so since the matter has largely been passed over by previous commentators dealing with the Achaemenid military<sup>9</sup>. Indeed, precisely why an elite military unit, in fact the bodyguard of the Great King, would want to emulate the lack of manliness of a former enemy by adopting the physical manifestations of that former foe's effeminacy and cowardice represents something of a mystery — and one which is not aided, unfortunately, by the scanty nature of the available evidence.

Of course, the fact that all we have of the original anecdote from Clearchus' *Lives* is a periphrasis by the much later Athenaeus, writing under the Roman Empire, further problematizes our interpretation of the alleged differentiation between the supposedly decadent Medes and the originally manly Persians — a group who, at least according to Greek writers, eventually fell victim to the excessive sophistication and tyrannical excesses of their former oppressors<sup>10</sup>. This view, it must be understood, largely serves a rhetorical purpose, namely that of explaining away ostensible Persian effeminacy (read military weakness) by the time that the Persians had come into regular and prolonged contact with the Greek world. As Castriota (2005: 94) points out, it is the Persians' "uncontrollable appetite, immoderation, and insatiable desire", together with their inability to persevere with their grandiose and hubristic designs, that makes them effeminate in the eyes of the Greeks — particularly when the latter sought to explain, in literature as well as visual art, how they could overcome such a numerically superior foe. This, after all, was a people that had built the world's first intercontinental empire, a feat hardly the work of luxury-addicted hedonists, despite what the Greeks might have thought<sup>11</sup>.

<sup>8</sup> Collins 2012b: 375-376, with nn. 31-32, citing Bosworth 1980: 5-6, argues that Alexander's adoption of oriental dress must be seen as one of the many reforms that he implemented in the aftermath of his victory against Darius III. This change in garb draws attention to his need to formulate state policies that would appeal to all of his subjects; in this endeavour, the Persian Empire offered him a relatively familiar and successful model.

<sup>9</sup> See, e.g., Charles 2012: 261. Though he deals with the *locus*, Charles does not explain why Persian soldiers were deliberately equipped in an effeminate fashion. The matter is also ignored by Keaveney 2003: 44. Keaveney (43), however, does note that the Persian bodyguards "can be traced back to the Median court", with reference to Xen. *Cyr.* 7.5.66-68.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Diod. Sic. 11.44.5, which refers to τὴν Περσικὴν τροφὴν; see also 11.46.2-3.

<sup>11</sup> See Castriota 2005: 96.

It is important, too, to bear in mind that Athenaeus' text takes as a given the Greek view, clearly espoused by Clearchus, that the Persians were initially subjects of the Medes (thus, they suffered at their hands and sought to punish them), even though the relationship between these two peoples appears more uncertain in sources emanating from the ancient Near East<sup>12</sup>.

As a result of these issues, Gorman and Gorman (2010: 199, with nn. 30-32), in their broader investigation of Clearchian fragments in Athenaeus, have recently challenged the wording of the text in question, and have argued that Athenaeus, and not Clearchus, may ultimately be responsible for the passage's negative references to the Median desire for luxury, together with their purported effeminacy. The same authors point out that our *locus* is closely tied to Athenaeus' demonstrable interest in associating the predilection of barbarian rulers for luxury with hubris — which eventually leads to their downfall<sup>13</sup>. It is possible that their passing remarks on the *locus* of interest to us have significant implications for how we should interpret the material contained in it. The relevant passage in Gorman and Gorman's article reads as follows:

A closer look at this passage stirs the usual misgivings: the verb εὐνουχίζειν is first attested in a direct transmission from the last decades of the first century CE. It is relatively common in works of Athenaeus' contemporaries. Of course, it is of little importance to the sense of the fragment that Athenaeus changed Clearchus' word for 'castrate'. However, if Athenaeus could make this adaptation, he could have added περὶ τῆς Μήδων τρυφῆς and διὰ ταύτην as well.

If Gorman and Gorman's view holds, it is possible to suggest: a) that the rest of the passage privileges the view, prevalent by the time of the Roman Empire, that the Medes were indeed effeminate and cowards in the eyes of the Persians, who overcame them; and b) that this whole notion is not beyond question, and perhaps ignores important aspects of the transition

<sup>12</sup> For an overview of this matter, see Waters 2014: 31-40, and especially 39; Cuyler Young 1998: 15-33; cf. Sweeney 2007: 169-192, who discusses the lack of evidence for the presence of both the Medes and Persians in the Mesopotamian regions that they conquered.

<sup>13</sup> Gorman and Gorman 2010, and especially 194; see also id. 2007: 39, which deals with historiographical matters pertaining to Athenaeus, also citing Pelling 2000: 175-176.

from Persian to Median clothing and equipment for those Persians closely associated with royalty, such as the *μηλοφόροι*.

Plutarch, who writes in the first century A.D. and is quoted by Athenaeus<sup>14</sup>, unsurprisingly makes a similar distinction to Athenaeus between Persian and Median costume when he discusses Alexander's adoption of elements of Persian regalia. Plutarch writes (*Alex.* 45.2):

οὐ μὴν τὴν γε Μηδικὴν ... [*sc.* στολὴν] προσήκατο παντάπασι βαρβαρικὴν καὶ ἀλλόκοτον οὖσαν, οὐδὲ ἀναξυρίδας οὐδὲ κἀνδυν οὐδὲ τιάραν ἔλαβεν, ἀλλὰ ἐν μέσῳ τινὰ τῆς Περσικῆς καὶ τῆς Μηδικῆς μιζάμενος εὖ πως, ἀτυφοτέραν μὲν ἐκείνης, ταύτης δὲ σοβαροτέραν οὖσαν.

However, he [*sc.* Alexander] did not adopt the Median dress, which was by all means barbaric and strange, nor did he wear the *anaxyrides*, or *kandys*, or tiara, but improvised a mixed style that was mid-way between the Persian and Median, more modest than the one and more imposing than the other<sup>15</sup>.

Plutarch essentially repeats this idea that Alexander rejected Median dress in the *De Fortuna Alexandri* (*Mor.* 329f-330a):

Ἀλέξανδρος οὐ τὴν ἐσθῆτα προσήκατο τὴν Μηδικὴν, ἀλλὰ τὴν Περσικὴν πολλῷ τῆς Μηδικῆς εὐτελεστέραν οὖσαν. τὰ γὰρ ἑξαλλὰ καὶ τραγικὰ τοῦ βαρβαρικοῦ κόσμου παραιτησάμενος, οἷον τιάραν καὶ κἀνδυν καὶ ἀναξυρίδας, ἐκ τοῦ Περσικοῦ καὶ Μακεδονικοῦ τρόπου μεμειγμένην τινὰ στολὴν ἐφόρει, καθάπερ Ἑρατοσθένης ἱστόρηκεν.

<sup>14</sup> Athenaeus quotes Plutarch of Chaeronea twice in his work, although he seems to engage with his intellectual interests more intensely through the figure of Plutarch of Alexandria, one of his dialogicians, who functions almost as a reflection of the Chaeronean writer. On this, see Berra 2005, and especially 141-142, 145.

<sup>15</sup> Translation modified from that of Collins 2012b: 390; see also 389-90, where the difficulty in deciphering whether Plutarch meant to write that Alexander chose a costume *between* the Persian and Macedonian garbs, rather than simply Median regalia, is discussed.

Alexander did not adopt the Median, but he did accept the Persian dress, because it was much simpler than the Median. Refusing the strange and theatrical clothing of the barbarian world, such as the tiara, the *kandys*, and the *anaxyrides*, he wore a mixed dress from the Persian and Macedonian styles, as Eratosthenes records<sup>16</sup>.

One of the explanations put forward recently by Collins (2012b: 391-392) regarding Alexander's criterion in rejecting specific items of oriental clothing, such as the Median *kandys* and the *anaxyrides*, is that he wished to avoid those items that had overt connotations of effeminacy<sup>17</sup>. Now, the supposed effeminacy of easterners is a frequent trope in Greek as well as Roman literature<sup>18</sup>. This is well recognized. But there is nevertheless a strong tradition among our Greco-Roman sources, exemplified by Xenophon in his *Cyropaedia*, as we shall see below, that the Persians, at the beginning of their hegemony of the Middle East, were anything but effeminate in their habits and dress. Plutarch's differentiation between the Persian and Median costumes seems to ascribe to this view. Furthermore, we are told that the Persians adopted the effeminate ways of the Medes (who had, at least according to the Greek tradition, once been their masters) only *after* they had subjugated their erstwhile overlords. Likewise, in source traditions not entirely sympathetic to Alexander, such as the so-called Vulgate, Alexander's adoption of Persian/Median regalia is

<sup>16</sup> Translation modified from that of Collins 2012b: 390. In addition, see Olbrycht 2014, and especially 46, with references arguing that Alexander clearly wore the so-called 'Median' dress comprising "an upper garment called *chiton mesoleukos*, a cloak *kandys*, a belt, a tiara and a diadem".

<sup>17</sup> At the same *locus*, Collins also observes that the *kandys* was used in the Greek theatre and was even worn by Athenian women from the late fifth century B.C. Still, he also cites a number of examples attesting to the adoption of oriental regalia by Greek kings, all of which evoke the luxury of the Persian court in the positive light of royal grandeur, rather than of decadence.

<sup>18</sup> After the Persians wars, ancient Greek authors (starting with Aeschylus' *Persae*) typically draw on the alleged effeminacy of the Persians, now presented as a major factor in the downfall of their empire; see Briant 1989: 33-47; Brosius 1996: 188; Hall 1989: 201-202; Gruen 2012: 10; Harrison 2002, especially 10-12; Kuhrt 2013: 10; Waters 2014: 95-6, 110-111; Sancisi-Weerdenburg 1987: 37-44. The Romans, by way of contrast, saw the *Greeks* as luxurious and effeminate; see Edwards 1993: 92-97; Griffin 1985: 1-31; furthermore, luxury was notably associated with eastern tyranny; see Bowditch 2006: 312-314; Griffin 1985: 1-31; Wallace-Hadrill 1990: 87-90, who all discuss the employment of this association in Roman politics and literature.



interpreted as a sign of his submission to oriental luxury, all of which forms part of his alleged moral decline<sup>19</sup>.

However, it has become increasingly apparent that the luxurious regalia of the Persian kings — and their guards by extension — was an etiquette adopted from other Near Eastern peoples with more longstanding royal traditions, and with whom the Persians interacted, be they the Medes or, what is perhaps more likely, the Elamites<sup>20</sup>. Hence, it seems possible that Athenaeus' citation is correct only to the extent that Clearchus made a reference to the *μηλοφόροι* and their attire and equipment being of Median type. The interpretation, however, of its symbolism, if we follow Gorman and Gorman, was probably added by Athenaeus. Perhaps this was carried out under the influence of Plutarch's discussion of Alexander's differentiation between Persian and Median courtly outfits, forms of attire which, at least from an inspection of our scanty sources, cannot be distinguished as clearly as Plutarch implies. With regard to the so-called 'Median' riding dress that the Persian courtiers and their king had adopted, Llewellyn-Jones (2013: 62) observes the following:

The Greeks erroneously called this [i.e., the riding dress] 'Median dress' — for there is no evidence for it being limited to the Medes, although unfortunately the tag has stuck in much contemporary scholarship. The labelling of this type of outfit as 'Median' needs to be overturned in favour of 'riding habit' or 'cavalry costume' or some other suitably equine-related idiom<sup>21</sup>.

Furthermore, as Olbrycht (2014: 45) notes, although “In both passages ... Plutarch states that Alexander did not use the tiara, the *kandys* cloak, and the trousers”, some other sources testify that Alexander *did* wear a

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<sup>19</sup> Collins 2012b: 375, with n. 26, citing Badian 1958: 154-157; Bosworth 1988: 144-145; id. 1995: 49.

<sup>20</sup> According to Llewellyn-Jones (2013: 25), “There can be little doubt that the Elamites form the ‘missing link’ in the chain of Persian royal ideological development and the Persians have now been revealed as the true heirs of the Elamites, and not of the Medes as has long been supposed”; cf. Henkelman 2011: 91, and see also Olbrycht 2014: 47, who asserts that, “Initially, in the 7th-6th centuries BC, the Persians adopted the Near Eastern/Elamite pleated dress, supplementing it with a headband or a hat”.

<sup>21</sup> See also Sekunda 2010: 256-272.

tiara and a *kandys* cloak<sup>22</sup>. In addition, Plutarch (*Alex.* 51.3) makes it clear that Alexander also wore a Persian belt (*zone*) and an Iranian jacket with white trimmings (*chiton dialeukos*). Plutarch's reference to Alexander's garb seems to draw on the Roman idea of virtuous rusticity, as repeated frequently in Augustan literature and imperial historiography<sup>23</sup>. In fact, Plutarch's emphasis on the use of *τρυφή* as a sign of effeminacy and a tendency to shirk from duty — an overall character unsuitable for public office — is pervasive in his *Vitae*<sup>24</sup>. Of note, too, is that, in the *Alexandrian Proverbs* (1.61.15-16), a work which seems to have been falsely attributed to Plutarch<sup>25</sup>, the author refers to luxury as the reason that the Samians were subjected to the Persians (!): “because of this luxury the Samians were enslaved to the Persians” (διὰ ταύτην τὴν τρυφήν οἱ Σάμιοι τοῖς Πέρσαις ἐδουλώθησαν). The very structure of this material, however, recalls the text of Athenaeus of interest to us here.

As was hinted at above, perhaps the most complete example of the supposed transformation from wearing what would later be interpreted as ‘manly’ to ‘effeminate’ costume occurs in Xenophon's *Cyropaedia*. This text, it must be made clear, can hardly be understood as history, being a didactic romance in the main, but it nevertheless captures the accepted version of events, at least as circulated in the Hellenic world<sup>26</sup>. At *Cyr.* 1.3.2, Xenophon compares the elaborate Median clothing, including make-up,

<sup>22</sup> Collins 2012b: 392-393, citing Arr. *Anab.* 4.7.4, *Itinerarium Alexandri* (§89) and Lucian, *Dial. Mort.* 12.4. Collins argues, *contra* Olbrycht, that Alexander probably neglected to wear the tiara because he specifically wanted to avoid being portrayed as Persian king. Instead, Alexander was aiming at being portrayed as an eastern king in more generic terms — an interpretation which *prima facie* appears to be supportable.

<sup>23</sup> Miles 1997 (see especially 168) refers to the value of rustic virtue in Livy, while Stambauch (1988: 63) refers to the concept in Vergil; see also, indicatively, Cic. *Rosc. Am.* 75; Hor. *Epod.* 2.49-60; Lucr. 2.20-36. For orientalist constructions of the East at the time of Alexander and in the Roman period, see Spencer 2002: *passim*; for the criticism levelled at Alexander by his soldiers for his intention to use Iranians in his army, see Olbrycht 2004: 20-76. On the Stoic overtones of the idea of excess as indicative of moral decline, see Anagnostou-Laoutides 2014: 271-292.

<sup>24</sup> See, for instance, Plut. *Ages.* 14.2; *Alc.* 16.1; *Luc.* 38.4; *Pel.* 1.3; *Marc.* 21.5. See also Swain 1992: *passim*, but especially 314.

<sup>25</sup> For the *locus*, see von Leutsch and Schneidewin 1839: 330. Crusius (1887: xvi-xviii) argues that, if Plutarch is the author of this corpus of proverbs, he must have relied on an earlier collection, possibly by the Alexandrian grammarian Seleucus, who is mentioned in the *Suda* (Σ 200).

<sup>26</sup> On the *Cyropaedia* and Xenophon's underlying intention for the work, see especially Tatum 1989: chapters 1-2, supported by Christesen 2006: 47.

wigs of false hair and ostentatious jewellery, with that of the simple garb originally worn by the more frugal Persians. Again, at *Cyr.* 2.4.5, we read of the plainness of the original Persian dress compared to the elaborate Median clothing<sup>27</sup>. Despite their initial aversion to such outlandish garb and grooming practices, Cyrus and his Persian court eventually adopt Median dress at 8.1.40-41, including the use of cosmetics.

Cyrus, being ostensibly the hero of the *Cyropaedia*, seems to escape censure *per se* for this remarkable transformation — and this is probably because Xenophon appreciates Cyrus' adoption of Median attire in the context of showcasing the young prince's authority, together with his ability to balance his luxurious garb, which denotes his regal power, with his manly conduct<sup>28</sup>. Hence, when Cyrus chooses his grandfather Astyages as the handsomest of the Medians (*Cyr.* 1.3.2-3), he receives, in return, a beautiful robe (στολή) as a mark of special favour that foreshadows his grandfather's decision to appoint him as his successor. The royal robe was the most precious article of the royal apparatus and was regarded as a clear sign of the divine favour that the king enjoyed, and of his close relationship with Ahura Mazda<sup>29</sup>. Moreover, although, in *Cyr.* 8.8.15, we read of the deepening effeminacy of the Persians *after* Cyrus' death (something which Xenophon associates with their contemporary need to rely, in the main, on Greek mercenaries, rather than men of their own ethnicity), this effeminacy illustrates their loss of self-control. While luxurious clothing ought to be a means of impressing the Persians' royal worth upon their subjects, its adoption, as Azoulay (2004: 162-163) suggests, now has a self-serving or indeed private purpose rather than a "public role", and has become a physical manifestation of the Persians' inner softness.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>27</sup> With *Xen. Cyr.* 4.5.54, and see also 5.2.17 (on general Persian simplicity).

<sup>28</sup> On this, see Azoulay 2004: 165, 167-170. Briant (1996: 313) concurs that luxury "can embody the splendor of royal power". In the context of royal apparel, Collins (2012b: 391-392) cites Duris of Samos (*FGrH* 76 F 14 = *Ath.* 12.535e), according to whom the Spartan king Pausanias adopted Persian regalia in an attempt to highlight his ability to exert royal power. Although this *locus* associates Pausanias with bad conduct, it nevertheless shows that adopting luxurious dress can be a concomitant of claiming that one can be ruler.

<sup>29</sup> Llewellyn-Jones 2013: 61-67.

<sup>30</sup> At this *locus*, Xenophon contrasts the time of Cyrus, when the Persians were still relying on Persian education and self-control, despite their adoption of Median garb and other symbols of power, with the present. This was a time when the Persians have allowed their old rigour to die out, but had nevertheless maintained the trappings of what Xenophon identified — from his characteristically Greek perspective — as "Median effemi-

In addition, and to return to the material transmitted to us by Athenaeus, Clearchus of Soli, being a student of Aristotle, was obviously familiar with the latter's work, as well as that of Plato. Yet both Plato and Aristotle refer to luxury as a danger for politicians of *all* ethnic backgrounds, including the Greeks. Therefore, in his *Politics* (1310b32-1311a8), Aristotle, reflecting on the Athenian Codrus, together with Cyrus and various Lacedaemonian, Macedonian and Molossian kings, states that all these men excelled in their love for honour, rather than simply a love for luxury — which predilection, of course, characterizes the tyrant. Aristotle (*Pol.* 1311a7) is keen to admit that both kings and tyrants are prone to excess, but observes that the difference between them relates to the *kind* of excess that they choose to pursue, with the king covetous of what brings honour (τιμή), while the tyrant seeks riches (χρήματα). Plato also refers to Cyrus and the inglorious end of his dynasty in the hands of his luxury-loving sons. Hence, at *Leg.* 695b, we read:

παραλαβόντες δ' οὖν οἱ παῖδες τελευτήσαντος Κύρου τρυφῆς μεστοὶ καὶ ἀνεπιπληξίας, πρῶτον μὲν τὸν ἕτερον ἄτερος ἀπέκτεινε τῷ ἴσῳ ἀγανακτῶν, μετὰ δὲ τοῦτο αὐτὸς μαινόμενος ὑπὸ μέθης τε καὶ ἀπαιδευσίας τὴν ἀρχὴν ἀπώλεσεν ὑπὸ Μήδων τε καὶ τοῦ λεγομένου τότε εὐνούχου, καταφρονήσαντος τῆς Καμβύσου μωρίας.

So when, at the death of Cyrus, his sons took over the kingdom, over-pampered and undisciplined as they were, first, the one killed the other, through annoyance at his being put on an equality with himself, and presently, being mad with drink and debauchery, he lost his own throne at the hands of the Medes, under the man then called the Eunuch, who despised the stupidity of Cambyzes<sup>31</sup>.

Plato (*Leg.* 695d) goes on to say that Darius, who came from humble origins, was able, because easy living had not gotten the better of him, to reclaim Cyrus' kingdom. Nevertheless, he made the same mistake as Cyrus

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nacy" (Μήδων μαλακία). It is as if Xenophon recognizes the difficulties of balancing, on the one hand, the need to maintain a military focus, with, on the other, the need for a warlike people to present an impressive appearance to their subjects.

<sup>31</sup> Translation of Bury 1984: 231.

and raised his son, Xerxes, “with the luxurious rearing of a royal house” (τῇ βασιλικῇ καὶ τρυφῶσῃ ... παιδείᾳ). Plato, who addresses the Spartans in this part of his work, exclaims in desperation at *Leg.* 595d: “‘O Darius’ — for it is thus one may rightly address the father — ‘how is it that you have ignored the blunder of Cyrus?’” (ὦ Δαρεῖε’, εἰπεῖν ἐστὶ δικαιοτάτον ἴσως, ὥς τὸ Κύρου κακὸν οὐκ ἔμαθες’). It is clear from the above that the classical authors were referring, in general, to the negative effect of luxury on *any* ruler, while the Medes, instead of being described as effeminate, are here presented as enemies able to use the weaknesses of their opponents to their benefit<sup>32</sup>. The dress, however flamboyant it might seem from a Greek perspective, is not important. It is the quality of the man beneath the luxurious attire that counts.

The notion of the Persians having simply borrowed accoutrements and dress from the Medes, not in order to highlight the latter’s effeminacy, but because they placed value on Median forms of dress, is also a feature of Herodotus’ earlier *Histories*. At 1.135.1, he writes that “they [i.e., the Persian soldiers] wear the Median dress, deeming it more beautiful than their own, and the Egyptian cuirass in war” (τὴν Μηδικὴν ἐσθῆτα νομίσαντες τῆς ἑωυντῶν εἶναι καλλίῳ φορέουσι καὶ ἐς τοὺς πολέμους τοὺς Αἰγυπτίους θώρηκας). But even this clashes with the notice, found elsewhere in the *Histories* (7.62.1), that “that fashion of armour [presumably the scale cuirass, as introduced at 7.61.1] is Median, not Persian” (Μηδικὴ ... αὕτη ἢ σκευὴ ἐστὶ καὶ οὐ Περσική)<sup>33</sup>. Suffice it to say here that the belief that Persian soldiers were equipped in the manner of their supposed previous overlords, i.e., the Medes, is very much a commonplace in the extant literature touching on the matter of Persian equipment. So, the Clearchian tale of the μηλοφόροι being equipped in a Median fashion should hardly surprise, more so given that Persians adopted so much of the culture that we associate, rightly or wrongly, with the Medes. What jars, however, is the notion that Median dress and equipment should be associated in Clearchus and/or Athenaeus with effeminacy.

<sup>32</sup> Of course, Aristotle distinguished between Greek and oriental kingship over subjects who lacked free will (see *Pol.* 1285a20-23, 1327b26-29, with Bringmann 1993: 8). But this discussion is also quite different from explaining the fall of the Persians and their Empire as a result of their yielding to Median luxury. Aristotle is not at all interested in the ethnic background of the agents of luxury.

<sup>33</sup> The confusion regarding cuirasses has been dealt with by Charles *in extenso* elsewhere and so does not need to be revisited in any detail here; see Charles 2012: 257-269.



In sum, some interpretations, even if not entirely secure, may be warranted about our *locus*. To extrapolate from the scanty information preserved — or very possibly added to — by Athenaeus, the *μηλοφόροι* adopted the garb and equipment of the conquered as a continual reminder to the Medes of their purported former hegemony over Persian lands. Yet, if we maintain Gorman and Gorman's view that Athenaeus added his own interpretation to the words of Clearchus, it may very well be that the whole business of Persian infantry guards *deliberately* being dressed in an effeminate fashion so as to taunt the Medes was a misunderstanding on Athenaeus' part, with Clearchus originally intending to show that the Persian *μηλοφόροι* could still be real soldiers, despite having adopted the luxurious garb and equipment of the Medes, with all their connotations of royalty and power. While we can never know for certain, the real reason that the *μηλοφόροι* were dressed thus is likely to be that the Persians simply associated such garb with what was most appropriate for a kingly court — as, one might imagine, their subject peoples also did, including the Medes, and the Elamites. If we bear in mind the probably erroneous Greek view that the Medes had once subjected the Persians to their rule, it follows that, if the Persians were to rule over the Medes, who had supposedly once ruled them, they at least needed to *look* like a ruling people. By extension, their king obviously needed to be protected by those who displayed a common Near Eastern visual language of sovereignty, or even divine favour. The standard had already been set, by the Medes themselves, or by the Elamites, or else by other Near Eastern peoples. Those who wrote long after the fall of the Achaemenids, and especially under the Roman Empire, therefore sought to explain why the élite of the Persian infantry were dressed in what was, to them, an effeminate and indeed unmilitary fashion that they deemed characteristic of moral decline. Whatever the case, while the Achaemenid dynasty eventually did fall, it was clearly not owing to the weakness of the *μηλοφόροι*, who are described as both loyal and brave in the face of the threat posed by Alexander the Great and his well-trained army<sup>34</sup>.

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<sup>34</sup> On their bravery, see Diod. Sic. 17.59.3. Some of the unit accompanied Darius III in his flight from Gaugamela, as suggested by Arr. *Anab.* 3.16.1.

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## THE HELLENISTIC CHORASMIAN *KETOS* OF AKCHAKHAN-KALA

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**Abstract:** This paper deals with a fragmentary unbaked-clay modelled sculpture unearthed at the site of Akchakhan-kala by the Karakalpak-Australian Expedition to Ancient Chorasmiā (KAE) during the 2007 field season. The modelled sculpture represents a *ketos*, the marine creature of ancient Greek mythology. The style and iconography of the Chorasmiā *ketos* perfectly fit the artistic canon developed for the representation of this figure in the Hellenic west since the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC and further during the late Classical and Hellenistic periods. Chronologically, being dated between the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC and the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD, the Akchakhan-kala specimen is one of the earliest preserved Hellenistic marine monsters of Central Asia. The two fragments relative to this *ketos* have already been considered by the author in a recently published book of 2015. The aim of the present article is to ponder the specimen more in detail against the background of Ancient Chorasmiā archaeology with further analysis of its artistic, religious and historical implications.

**Keywords:** Ancient Chorasmiā, Central Asia, Akchakhan-kala, Hellenistic art, *ketos*, river goddess

### Introduction: historical context

A fragmentary unbaked-clay modelled high-relief depicting a *ketos* has been discovered during the archaeological operations of the KAE at the Ancient Chorasmiā *gorodishche* of Akchakhan-kala<sup>2</sup> in 2007. The

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<sup>1</sup> The author's postdoctoral project is linked to a biennial (2014-2015) fieldwork in Ancient Chorasmiā which has received financial support from the French State in the frame of the "Investments for the future" Programme IdEx Bordeaux, reference ANR-10-IDEX-03-02. The KAE, a joint project of the Uzbek Academy of Sciences, Karakalpak branch, and the University of Sydney, is supported by the Australian Research Council.

<sup>2</sup> In earlier publications the site of Akchakhan-kala (also spelled Akshakhan-kala) was called Kazakl'i-yatkan. The name has been changed from this local one to the name registered in the official heritage record of Uzbekistan.



modelled sculpture is composed of two fragments which are the head and the terminal portion of the coiled tail of the creature (Pls. 4-5). The elongated canine head, characterized by a bulging eye, exposed red gums and white fangs, measures ca. 30x12 cm and it sticks out ca. 9 cm from the wall to which it was joined. The round-shaped fragment relative to the coiled tail of the creature measures ca. 47x45 cm and it is characterized by black dots painted on its white surface and by the over-painted red terminal part of the tail ending with a black fin.

Ancient Chorasmia was an ancient Iranian Central Asian polity mentioned in the “Young” Avesta (*Yasht* 10, the Hymn to Mithra) and also attested among the Persian “nations” of the Achaemenid royal inscriptions (DB, DSe, DPe, DNa and XPh; and by the captions regarding the “nations” submitted by the kings of kings on their royal tombs: DNe and A2Pa). Among archaeologists Chorasmia is primarily known for the archaeological endeavours of the Soviet “Khorezm Expedition” (KhAEE)<sup>3</sup> led by S. P. Tolstov (1907-1976) that rediscovered in the 20<sup>th</sup> century the Chorasmian culture, extensively publishing reports and monographs on the subject (Tolstov 1948a, 1948b, 1962. For a full KhAEE bibliography, see Minardi 2015a). The Ancient Chorasmian territory, correspondent to modern Uzbekistan (Republic of Karakalpakstan and District of Khorezm), and northern Turkmenistan (District of Daşoguz), is located on the lower reaches of the Amu-Darya (the Greek Oxus), south of the Aral Sea, and it is surrounded by the Kizil-kum and Kara-kum deserts, thus relatively isolated as an “oasis” if compared to other Central Asian polities at its south (Pl. 1).

The area is characterised by a flat landscape (excluding the rocky ridge of the Sultan-uiz-dag) and it is marked by the presence of numerous ancient fortified strongholds (the *gorodishche* - Khozhaniyazov 2005), and of extensive canalisation works (Andrianov 1969). These elements, new on the background of the local Iron Age, only appear *de facto* for the first time in the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC due to an Achaemenid intervention in the area probably through the major Central Asian satrapy of Bactriana (Minardi 2015a). Chorasmia, for its position between sedentary Central Asia and the northern steppes inhabited by the semi-nomadic population known by the Persians as *Sakā* (oriental Scythians), had always played an important role

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<sup>3</sup> “Chorasmian Archaeological-Ethnographical Expedition, division of the USSR Academy of Sciences”.

as intermediary between these two “worlds” and it was strategic for the Achaemenid policy in the region (Minardi 2015a with literature).

Chorasmia’s history was thereafter a history of local developments (characterized by a peculiar conservatism as attested for instance by the use of its centuries-long local era, or by the preservation of the Imperial Aramaic as script for its language up to the 8<sup>th</sup> century AD - Livshits and Lukonin 1964; Livshits and Gudkova 1967; Livshits 1968; 1984; 2003; 2004; MacKenzie 1983; 1991) that took place in a chronological continuum up to the beginning of the 8<sup>th</sup> century AD with the Arab advent in Central Asia (Minardi 2013 with references). On the other hand, Chorasmia partook in the events involving Central Asia such as its fall under the influence of the Hellenistic civilisation in the aftermath of Alexander *anabasis* and with the Seleucid rule, although, unlike its southern neighbours, the polity only progressively accepted some Hellenistic innovations in various fields, from material culture — including the *ketos* discussed here — to architecture<sup>4</sup>. Only later, in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD, was Chorasmia fully integrated in a trading and exchange network with the rest of Central Asia as the material culture of Toprak-kala points out (as already noted by Tolstov 1962: 226; on Toprak-kala, see Nerazik & Rapoport 1981; Rapoport & Nerazik 1984).

Since 1995 Akchakhan-kala is the Chorasmian *gorodishche* at the centre of the Karakalpak-Australian Expedition to Ancient Chorasmia (KAE) archaeological activities in the Uzbekistan, Autonomous Republic of Karakalpakstan, led by A.V.G. Betts, University of Sydney, and V.N. Yagodin, Institute of Humanities, Karakalpak branch of the Uzbek Academy of Sciences. This site, which most likely was a royal Chorasmian seat between the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC and the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD as confirmed by epigraphic evidence (Betts & Yagodin pers. comm.; on the C14 dating, see Betts *et al.* 2009; 2015), is characterized by two mud-brick fortified enclosures, the upper and lower ones (Pl. II)<sup>5</sup>. The upper fortification wall encloses and protects two main structures: the Ceremonial Complex (Area 10) and the Central Monument (Area 07 – Minardi & Khozhaniyazov

<sup>4</sup> For example only one Chorasmian site gave evidence of terracotta antefixes and tiles (Kaladzhik-tepe, see Zav’yalov 1996).

<sup>5</sup> For references on the chronology of the site, and about the KAE archaeological activities at Akchakhan-kala and more in general in the Tash-k’irman area see, Helms & Yagodin 1997; Helms *et al.* 2001; Helms *et al.* 2002; Betts & Yagodin 2008; Betts *et al.* 2009; Kidd and Betts 2010; Minardi & Khozhaniyazov 2015.

2015). The Ceremonial Complex (Pl. 3), which since its 1<sup>st</sup> century BC - 1<sup>st</sup> century AD stage mainly consists in a fortified parallelogram-planned building characterized by monumental accesses, a corridor developed along its perimeter, a columned hall and an altar area, was decorated with wall paintings (Kidd *et al.* 2004; Kidd 2006; Yagodin *et al.* 2009; Kidd & Betts 2010) and unbaked-clay sculptures. The most recent discovery related to this evidence is a remarkable larger than life-size representation believed to be of the Zoroastrian god Srōsh painted on the southern wall of the Columned Hall (Pl. 3, fragments nos. 66 A-F) that testifies the cultic role of the complex and indicates a new perspective on Zoroastrianism in Ancient Chorasmia (Betts *et al.* 2015)<sup>6</sup>.

The sacred role of the complex is also underlined by the discovery of a fire altar (of which a fragmentary ivory leg was found — Kidd 2011: fig. 8 a-b; Minardi 2015a: 109-110, fig. 27) and by the presence of our *ketos* that was found south of the same altar (Pl. 3). The fragments of *ketos* lay in the clay contexts overlying the floor level of the area along with other unpublished unbaked-clay fragments which were left *in situ*; since then the Main Altar Area has not been further investigated.

### Iconography and style of the *ketos* and of similar creatures

It is here assumed that the fragmentary unbaked-clay relief from Akchakhan-kala represents a *ketos*, a sea-monster of western origin in its standardized 5<sup>th</sup> century BC western iconography. The Hellenic representation canon of this sea creature — which will last up to the Middle Ages and goes even beyond — is marked by the occurrence of a serpentine body with a fish tail and fin, a long corrugated muzzle often with upturned and elongated snout, and a spiked crest covering the serpentine body often departing from its head<sup>7</sup>. The head is normally dog-like, although

<sup>6</sup> See also Betts & Yagodin 2008 and for some preliminary considerations on Chorasmia within the Avesta and Zoroastrianism, see Minardi 2015a: 11-12 with literature.

<sup>7</sup> Boardman 1986; 1987; 1997. The dog's head and the coiled tails are also attribute of Scylla/Skylla (Jentel 1997) and sometimes *kētē* are depicted as Scylla's tails, as for example in a 4<sup>th</sup> century BC Apulian pilgrim flask (Jentel 1997: fig. 50b), and in the Scylla of Morgantina (3<sup>rd</sup> century BC - Guzzo 2003: 51, fig. 16). Note that the head of the *ketos* is remarkably distinguished from the typical dogs' *protomai* of the female monster. The same coiled or uncoiled tails are attested in other marine creatures, from Nereus to hippocampi.

with some variants which confers to the monster a closer resemblance to a dragon or a crocodile<sup>8</sup>. In the western Greek and Graeco-Roman world, the *ketos* is a sea-monster generally associated with marine divinities and so with their mythology, and it appears for instance in the Homeric story of Thetis and the Nereids with Achilles' weapons, it is the main character of the myth of Andromeda and more in general it belongs to the marine *thiasos* (for further reference, see Icard-Gianolio & Szabados 1992; Boardman 1997; Barringer 1998; Ogden 2013a; 2013b).

The Akchakhan-kala specimen (Pls. 4a & 4b) follows this "guide-lines", and its head is elongated and canine-like, moreover characterised by exposed red gums, long white fangs and a pathetic expression of the eye which looks upright. The muzzle is not upturned but the nostril is protruding. The eye is also bulging and outlined by a black line. This latter outline, together with the other short black lines departing from the eye-socket in a sort of radial pattern, represents the wrinkles of the monster's skin. The shadows under the eye are also represented. The *ketos* was depicted with a semi-opened mouth and part of its red tongue is still visible, although partially covered by the first monster's big white fang. All the details of the relief are painted over the white gypsum coat applied to the modelled clay base, with the exclusive use of black and red colours as in most of the Akchakhan-kala wall-paintings. Unfortunately the clay element which protrudes at the back of the *ketos* head is in a poor state of preservation. Nevertheless this portion of the sculpture can be integrated on the basis of some of the torque terminals worn by the "portraits" of the Akchakhan-kala wall paintings (fig. 6 - *infra*) that clearly depict a more stylised *ketos* with a flaming tongue: this is the ear(s) resembling fins, another characteristic that matches some western representation of *kētē* (*infra*). Whether a spiky fish-fin covered the high-relief parts of the *ketos* (head and body) is currently not ascertainable, although this element could have been possibly painted directly on the wall on which the *ketos* was placed.

What remains of the monster's body is part of its coiled tail (Pl. 4b). The skin of the *ketos* is characterized by black dots, once again painted on

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<sup>8</sup> Cf. for instance the two Tarentine rhyta in Hoffmann 1966: Pl. XLIII, one in the shape of a dog's head, the other in shape of *ketos*' head. The only noticeable difference among the two consists in the presence of a crest on the *ketos*. The *ketos* formed within the Greek art from parts taken from different animals such as sea-horse, boar etc. (for further details, see Boardman 1997).

the white standard background. Other over-painted details are the red terminal part of the tail, which continues inside the black cavity of the coil to express the flabby abdomen of the beast (as in reptiles), and its all-black terminal fin, unfortunately not fully preserved. Black is also the round line that encircles the central cavity of the coil and goes underneath the red final part of the tail.

The first “explicit” *ketos* appears (so is labelled) in the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter of the 6<sup>th</sup> century on a Corinthian black-figure hydria from Caere (Ruscillo & Papadopoulos 2002: 207, fig. 19). At the end of the same century - beginning of the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC the *ketos* is on the coinage of Kindya (Caria - Kagan & Kriti 1995)<sup>9</sup>. Since then, and for the Classical period especially on red-figure vases, the depiction of *kētē* multiplies and varies (as regards its muzzle, shaped as different animals), and a more standardised dragon-like *ketos* with several small-razor teeth and with an elongated snout seems to be well established in the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC<sup>10</sup>, an iconography which will last for centuries and go beyond the end of Antiquity<sup>11</sup>.

<sup>9</sup> Later, during the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC *ketos* appears also on the numismatic emission of Agrigento and Syracuse (Sicily - Arnold-Biucchi 1990), and in the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC in Greece at Corinth and Itanos (Crete - as already noted by Boardman 1987). For further details on the genesis of the *ketos*, see Robinson 1946: 360-368. See also Boardman 1986, 1987 and 1997 with references.

<sup>10</sup> See the following examples in chronological order: the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC *ketos* incised on a Prenestine cyst held in Karlsruhe (Schumacher 1891: Pl. III.), the *kētē* with nereids painted in an early 4<sup>th</sup> century BC marble *podanipter* found at Ascoli Satriano (Bottini & Setari 2009: 45, with a detail at 47), the mosaic with *ketos* from the *Casa del Drago* of Kaulon (Monasterace, 4<sup>th</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> century BC - Giustozzi *et al.* 2013: 213, no. 2), the *kētē* on Hellenistic jewelry of the first half of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC (Hoffmann and Davidson 1966: 51-52, figs. 1a-2a; 180, fig. 68), the Hellenistic Etruscan urns of mid-3<sup>rd</sup>-1<sup>st</sup> centuries BC with mythological and stand-alone representations of this sea-monster (Körte 1916: Pl. 30, no. 3; Pl. 31, nos. 5-6; Pl. 33, no. 11; Pls. 147-148; Pl. 149, no. 11; *ketos* represented only by his head: Körte 1890: Pl. 39), the Hellenistic relief of the “altar” of Domitius Ahenobarbus (*terminus ante quem* 107 BC - Bianchi Bandinelli & Torelli 1976: no. 42; Coarelli 1968), the Tellus relief of the neo-Attic *Ara Pacis Augustae* (inaugurated 9 BC), the Portland Vase (Augustan age - Haynes 1975; Simon 1986: 162-165; Walker 2004), and the *ketos* within a panel of the pedestal of the Jerusalem’s menorah in the relief of the Arch of Titus built by Domitian (for further details, see Yarden 1991). For other examples and references, see Boardman 1987 and 1997. Furthermore, it seems that in Greek art the prevalent representation of the marine *thiasos* (which usually includes *kētē*) since the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC was a sculptural one, influenced by a group of Skopas (Lattimore 1976).

<sup>11</sup> E.g. for the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD, Jonah swallowed by the whale (a perfect *ketos*) in the group of marbles of the Cleveland Museum (illustrated in Wixom 1967: figs. 25-28; Wischmeyer 1981: Pls. 3-4), and the Romano-Hellenistic medallions from Aboukir and



The pictorial consuetude of rendering the upper part of the tails of sea-monsters (not only of *kētē*) on red-figure vases of the 5<sup>th</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> centuries BC with dots (as a “leopard skin”), separated from the abdomen by black contour lines that follows the sinuous development of the tails, found a striking parallel in the Chorasmian *ketos*. A series of South-Italian “plastic” vases of the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC depicting the struggle between a crocodile (main inspiration for the creation of the *ketos* type) and a pigmy (see Hoffmann 1997: 156-157), which are based on Attic models of the 5<sup>th</sup> century by Sotades (mid-5<sup>th</sup> century BC - *ib.* 19-33), perfectly show this iconographic characteristic (fig. 4), as well as some Apulian vases of mid-4<sup>th</sup> century BC with Nereids on *kētē* and hippocampi (e.g. the Ruvo group — see conveniently the examples published in Icard-Gianolio & Szabados 1992: nos. 342 and 343; see also the red-figure Apulian amphora held at Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Antikensammlung reproduced in Barringer 1998: Pl. 116), and of the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter of the same 4<sup>th</sup> century (e.g. Jentoft-Niesen & Trendall 1991: Pls. 179, 181, 193-195). In some other and contemporary cases the scales of the monster are represented in different manners, more or less naturalistic or schematic, but often in Greek vase painting snake and reptile skin is given by dots<sup>12</sup>. A 4<sup>th</sup> century BC gold plaque from the Kul-Oba kurgan (Crimea - Artamonov 1969: no. 256 — here fig. 1) in shape of a *ketos* with a boar-like muzzle of Eastern Greek craftsmanship, show both the naturalistic and dotted scaled-skin, used the first for the body of the marine snake, the latter for its forepart<sup>13</sup>. A similar visual device has also been used to represent the skin of crocodile-*ketos* in a Hellenistic Central Asian spiral gold bracelet, although vice-versa its forepart is scaled whilst its tail is the dotted one (Bernard & Bopéarchchi 2002, in particular see figs. 4-6), and during the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD in Gandhāra the fish-body of ichthyocentaurs are decorated in the same way (Czuma 1985: 178, no. 91)<sup>14</sup>.

Tarsos (see Dahmen 2008: Pl. 106 N). For an example relative to the 5<sup>th</sup> century AD, see the marine creatures in the ivory diptych of “Artemis - Dionysos” (Delbrueck 1929).

<sup>12</sup> At Olynthus the mosaic with *kētē* and Nereids from the Villa of Good Fortune dated by the excavator at the end of the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC (Robinson 1933: 109-115, Pls. I-X; 1934; 1946: Pl. III - *contra* Saltzmann 1982: ca. 370-360 BC) shows a sea-creature closer to an hippocampus than a dog or a dragon, where the dots are vice-versa used to represent the abdomen of the fantastic beasts.

<sup>13</sup> From the kurgan of Kul-Oba, see also the gold scabbard with *ketos*/hippocampus (Schlitz 1994: no. 231).

<sup>14</sup> Cf. with the much stylized “toilet tray” no. 43 in Francfort 1979.



Fig. 1. Gold applique in shape of *ketos* from the Kul-Oba burial mound (after Piotrovskiĭ 1973-1974: Pl. 15)



Fig. 2. The Hellenistic *ketos* from Canosa di Puglia (after Becatti 1955: fig. 447b).



Fig. 3. Detail of the Hellenistic *ketos* from Canosa di Puglia (after Becatti 1955: fig. 447a).

The closest parallel among the Hellenistic western specimens of *kētē* with our Chorasmian sea-monster is the one from Canosa di Puglia depicted on a gilded pyxis of 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC (figs. 2-3) which I have already considered in a previous work (Minardi 2015a). The canine marks of this *ketos*' head without a curled nostrils/upright nose and with an open mouth with exposed gums with few large fangs and a deep-socketed pathetic eye, are the same ones visible on the Akchakhan-kala *ketos* (with the likely addition of the fin-shaped ear located at the back of the animal's head). Even the single-coiled body development of the Hellenistic *ketos* can be compared with the likely aspect of the Chorasmian specimen (cf. e.g. Icard-Gianolio & Szabados 1992: no. 362, early 4<sup>th</sup> century BC), although tails of marine creatures already in the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC can be both coiled or not (e.g. marble vase from Rhodes, Barringer 1994: Pl. 45). The coil, moreover, although represented with a scaled and not "dotted" skin, shows a very similar division in zones separated by lines (here incised) and a very similar superimposition of the final part of the tail (shorter in the Chorasmian case) over the coiled part of the snake-shaped body. The style of the two figures, in particularly as regards the head of the monster, is



Fig. 4. Red-figure rhyton from southern Italy (manner of Sotades, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, 1955; acc. no. 55.11.3 - [www.metmuseum.org](http://www.metmuseum.org)).

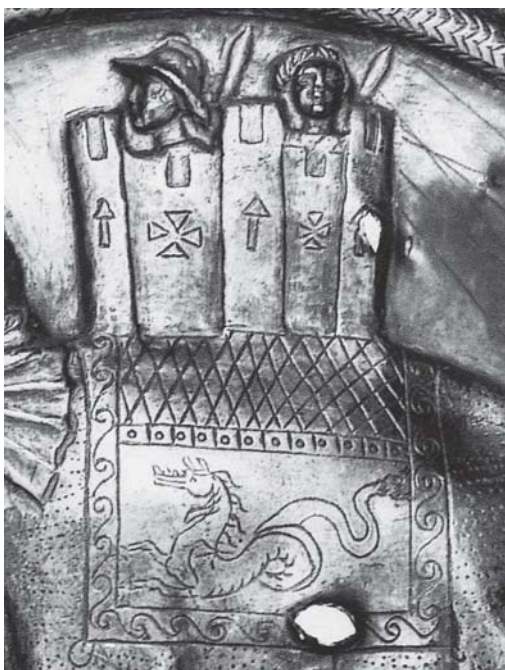


Fig. 5. Detail of Bactrian *phalera* with depiction of a war elephant (after Seipel 1996: 261, fig. 126).

quite close despite the different medium and historical environment, while the tail of the Chorasmian *ketos* seems more locally interpreted.

In Central Asia the oldest known representation of the Hellenistic *ketos* is the renowned detail that decorates the saddle of a Bactrian war-elephant (fig. 5), ascribed to the mid or late 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC (Pfrommer 1983: 10; mid-2<sup>nd</sup> century BC - Treister 1999). The beast here tends to look more equine if compared to the Akchakhan-kala specimen, but the presence of crocodile-like wrinkling on the long muzzle brings it back closer to the standard dragon/dog-like creature (cf. with the *ketos* on the carved mantel from the Temple of Despoina at Lycosoura by the Neoclassicist sculptor Damophon, 1<sup>st</sup> half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC - Lattimore 1976: fig. 19). Another *ketos* classified as “Bactrian” is currently held in the collection of the Miho Museum and dated in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC<sup>15</sup>. This last example has a canine head with a straight muzzle that can be compared with the Chorasmia *ketos*’ head, as well as its similar single-coiled body ending with a fish-fin, although this curls - on the contrary of the Chorasmia specimen - behind the body of the creature. Additionally, there is the aforementioned Hellenistic gold bracelet from Bactria (Bernard and Bopearachchi 2002) which dates in the mid-2<sup>nd</sup> - 1<sup>st</sup> century BC. Thus it seems that the Chorasmian sea-monster is one of the oldest (1<sup>st</sup> century BC - 1<sup>st</sup> century AD) of the whole area and, as far as I know, almost the only one preserved as a (modelled) sculpture, if we exclude a Late Antique *makara* represented in a unbaked-clay bas-relief of Pendjikent and some other secondary decorative elements depicting dragons from Sogdiana (see Belenitskĭ & Meshkeris 1986)<sup>16</sup>.

<sup>15</sup> Image and catalogue entry available at: <http://www.miho.or.jp/booth/html/artcon/00003372e.htm>.

<sup>16</sup> In Pendjikent (Sogdiana) an unbaked-clay relief of Hellenistic taste set in an aquatic environment shows a Triton and a *ketos* that in this case is much closer to an Indian *makara* than to a *ketos* (Belenitskĭ & Piotrovskĭ 1959: Pls. XXVIII-XXIX and XXXI-XXXII). This composition was influenced by the late Gandhāran art — cf. with the Hadda “Fish Porch”, as noted by Belenitskĭ & Marshak 1971. The *makara* is a creature which belongs to the in Indian literature and arts (Darian 1976). As it seems, its iconographic type was created only in the mid-3<sup>rd</sup> century BC when it is for the first time attested at Lomas Rishi (Vogel 1929/1930; see also Viennot 1954). Its shape took inspiration from crocodiles and it was very likely influenced by the Greek sea-monster *ketos* (Boardman 1986). The famous statue of Kanishka from Mathura is decorated with a *makara* in the terminal part of the king’s club (Rosenfield 1976: Pl. 2b). Cf. with some ornaments of Sogdian armours painted at Pendjikent (Belenitskĭ 1980: 109 and 198; Grenet 2006: fig. 14).





Fig. 6. Detail of a wall painting fragment from Akchakhan-kala showing a torque with zoomorphic terminals.

During the Late Antique period (6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> centuries AD) in Central Asia and in particular in Sogdiana, the *ketos* appears to have known a discreet success as for instance witnessed by the finds of Pendjikent (the four-armed goddess painted in Temple II, see Belenitskiĭ & Marshak 1971: figs. 3a-3b - here fig. 7; Belenitskiĭ 1980: fig. 17; decorative elements in shape of dragons, *ib.*: figs. 91-92), Bundjikat (wall paintings, Sokolovskiĭ 2009: 180-181, no. 77 - here fig. 8), Varaksha (plaster relief, Shishkin 1963: 184, fig. 105), and from toreutic material (Darkevich 1976: fig. 1, nos. 1-2; Marshak 1986: no. 68). Although in some cases these later Central Asia “dragons” were influenced by the iconography of the Indian *makara* (on the twofold relation between *ketos* and *makara*, see Boardman

1986) and the oriental dragon (*infra*), likewise some other iconographic and stylistic elements of the Central Asian arts of that time (on the relations between Sogdiana and India, see Rapin 1995, 1996; Grenet 1991, 2002, 2004 and 2006; La Vaissière 2005: 71-87; Compareti 2009. On the connections with the steppe *infra*), the echo of the iconography of the Greek archetype is still present, as for example in the vehicle of the above-mentioned four armed goddess of Pendjikent Temple II (fig. 7) whose aspect is characterised by a stratification of several artistic elements locally elaborated. In Chorasmia the same can be argued for the depiction of a goddess in western garb seated on a four-legged dragon/*makara* (more than a *ketos* - Smirnov 1909: no. 285; Darkevich 1976: Pl. 25, no. 6), and for some other Late Antique material, all evidence that points toward connections with the south<sup>17</sup>. Another Late Antique Chorasmian silver bowl, inscribed in Chorasmian, has in its central emblema the representation of a goddess in armour sitting on a lion-headed marine monster that, it is noteworthy, presents a dotted rendering of the skin (Smirnov 1909: no. 44; Azarpay 1969: Pl. 5c; Darkevich 1976: Pl. 25, no. 5).

In the Indian subcontinent a series of Greek *kētē* appears in the so called Gandhāran toilet trays, in association with Nereids, cupids or as stand-alone decoration (Francfort 1979; Dar 1979; Boardman 1992; Tanabe 2002). These stone *phiale* (on hypotheses about their function, see Lerner & Kossak 1991: 60-66; Falk 2014) initially dated in the 2<sup>nd</sup>-1<sup>st</sup> centuries BC (Francfort 1979) and now considered belonging to the 1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> centuries AD (Lo Muzio 2011) are clearly Hellenistic (although somewhat crude), and actually show the iconography elaborated during the Classical period (Boardman 1986; cf. the decoration of the Hellenistic Etruscan urns, *infra*). For present purposes, considering that stylistically there is not much to associate this evidence to the Akchakhan-kala *ketos* (different medium and dimensions), this datum shows that Hellenistic models were known in Chorasmia approximately at the same epoch as in Gandhāra and before the partaking of Chorasmia in the so called Silk-Road network since the

<sup>17</sup> This “goddess on dragon” of unknown provenience (allegedly Dagestan) is associated to the Chorasmian corpus of silver bowls with goddesses and other mythological characters for its style (Darkevich 1976: 108). On the Indian, Roman-Hellenistic and local elements attested in the Chorasmian silver bowls depicting a four-armed goddess, see Minardi 2013. Already in the 2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> century AD at Toprak-kala it is possible to witness in the coroplastic arts of the polity an influence from Gandhāra (Minardi 2015a: 103-113 with references).

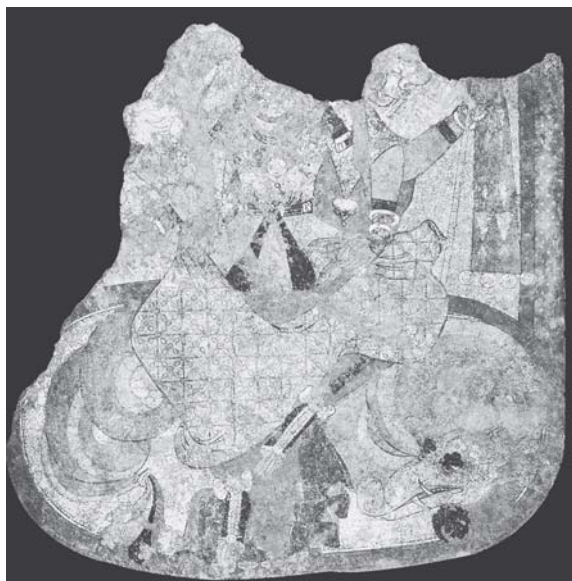


Fig. 7. Wall painting with four-armed goddess from Pendjikent Temple II (after Belenitskĭ 1980, fig. 17).



Fig. 8. Detail of a wall painting from Bundjikat (after Sokolovskĭĭ 2009: 181, No. 77).

2<sup>nd</sup> century AD, which saw its full integration in the Central Asian culture of the time (Minardi 2015a). The early use of the unbaked-clay technique in Chorasmia confirms this fact (on this and on the role of Hellenized Bactria, see *infra*).

The iconographical stratification generated in Central Asia already in the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD, with also the influence of the steppes and of its animal-style in the local crafts, is shown by the finds of the Tillya Tepe necropolis (Sarianidi 1985; on the steppes factor, see Francfort 2011; 2012). Most of the monsters represented in the golden items of this “hoard” similar to *kētē*, dating at the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter of the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD, are not strictly related to the *ketos* iconography presently discussed, but they are genuine dragons thanks to an additional (to a middle-eastern one) layer of oriental connections and due to their origin (Brentjes 2000; Boardman 2003a; 2003b; 2012; Francfort 2012). Perhaps a couple of *kētē* can be recognized in a pendant depicting a half-naked and winged *potnia theron* from Tomb VI (Sarianidi 1985: 105, no. 48; a goddess of sexuality/fertility). Here the symmetrical sea-creatures have a clear dog-like head although their bodies instead of being snake-shaped appear as those of large fishes.

What is important to underline is that in the Chorasmian *ketos* under scrutiny there is no traceable influence neither of the contemporary Indian art (proper, outside Hellenism), nor of the steppic animal style. The steppic connection of Chorasmian must not be underestimated but the fact that the Akchakhan-kala *ketos* is made with a western technique and that it appears to be stylistically Greek, are remarkable facts in a polity where the grip of Hellenism was not as strong as in its southern neighbours. The only close parallel with *Sakā* material can be done with a “gold and turquoise” belt buckle/relief plaque generally said to come from Siberia and of uncertain dating (now at the Hermitage, Siberian Collection of Peter the Great - Piotrovskiĭ 1987: 115, no. 146, 3<sup>rd</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> century BC; Boardman 2010: colour Pl. 3, no. 344 - here fig. 9) which is clearly on its own account influenced by the Greek *ketos*: the wolf’s head has been crafted with very fine details (elongated board muzzle, wrinkles, big fang, pathetic eye etc.), as well as the snake which is attacking the wolf, all characteristics that distinguish this gold buckle from other similar animal-style ornaments (as noted by Piotrovskiĭ 1987: 115; for cfs., see the catalogue by Boardman 2010)<sup>18</sup>.

<sup>18</sup> Cfs. two ornamental plaques for belt buckles published by Pfrommer dated between the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC- 1<sup>st</sup> century AD (Pfrommer 1993: 59; 204-205, nos. 93-94); pair of



Fig. 9. Gold relief plaque, Hermitage, Siberian Collection of Peter the Great (after Piotrovskii 1987: 115, no. 146).

### The technique of the Chorasmian *ketos*

The Chorasmian *ketos* is an unbaked-clay modelled high-relief coated with plaster and with over-painted details. With the restoration of the two fragments still in progress<sup>19</sup> it is not possible to ascertain if a wooden frame was used in order to sustain the modelled sculpture, although, this is unlikely. The *ketos* apparently was joined to the wall that sustained it, as this structure was made in contemporary with and for the sculpture. The mixture usually used for the modelled elements at Akchakhan-kala is particular, consisting in a mix of fine clay and fine straws.

Moulds, as typical for the unbaked-clay technique in Central Asia, India and Iran (Varma 1970; Tarzi 1986; Bollati 2008), have been probably

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solid gold bracelet from the “Oxus Treasure” dated in the 5<sup>th</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> century BC (Curtis 2012: 38, no. 27). Both these example, belonging to the steppes world, are in my opinion more influenced by the iconography of dog-headed *ketos* than by the steppes dragon or similar and older mythical beast. The Oxus bracelet is unlikely so ancient.

<sup>19</sup> The back of the coil is currently reinforced thus covered with restoration material applied during its removal from the terrain in 2007.



used to shape the Chorasmian relief. The use of moulds for the Chorasmian unbaked-clay modelled sculpture is confirmed by the 2<sup>nd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> centuries AD finds from the palace of Toprak-kala (the Chorasmian royal seat which follows the abandonment of Akchakhan-kala during the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD and marks the definitive change of its material culture - Minardi 2015a), where in particular among other fragments (reused on a corridor of the north-west tower of the palace), a fragmentary mould of a coiled snake-tail has been recovered (Rapoport & Nerazik 1984: 69, 200-201, fig. 84, nos. 4-5).

In Chorasmia this technique appears to be a 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC innovation and the unbaked-clay fragments from Elkharas (Southern Chorasmia) are the earliest specimens of modelled sculpture for the polity as far known, along with the pieces from Akchakhan-kala (there is no evidence for the previous centuries apart from the fragmentary mould of Kalal̥y-g̥y̥r 1 of uncertain chronology - see *infra*). Central Asia antecedents are to be found in all those territories that were invested by and assimilated the Hellenistic culture: Ai-Khanoum (Bernard 1969: 344-345, with figs. 19 and 20; specimens published also in Pugachenkova 1979: 88-89, figs. 101-102; Bernard 1973), Takht-i Sangin (Litvinskiĭ & Pichikyan 1994: 62, figs. 16, 17; Litvinskiĭ 2010: figs. 42 and 44; Sherwin-White & Kurth 1993: fig. 17), and at Old Nisa in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC but created on the basis of Hellenistic prototypes (Invernizzi 2009)<sup>20</sup>. The unbaked-clay technique is by definition made *in loco*, and in the aforementioned cases a workshop of coroplaster/sculptors with a western background must have been working on site. I have already tried in a recent work to argument that a new *facies* of the Chorasmian material culture autonomously developed in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC (Antique 2 - formerly “Kangyuĭ”) but with the assimilation of several Hellenistic elements due to the contacts with Bactriana and in general with the Seleucid territories (Minardi 2015a: 87-122). It is in fact very likely that the *ketos* iconography and its stylistic characteristics came from the Hellenised south to which Chorasmia had always a privileged relationship together with the cousin Sogdiana. Thus it is possible to consider among the possibilities that a Central Asian coroplaster with a Hellenistic background worked at Akchakhan-kala between the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC and the

<sup>20</sup> To note also that at Old Nisa an armed Triton appears as decorative element on the earflap of Attic helmets of Hellenistic unbaked-clay sculptures (Pilipko & Puschnigg 2002).

1<sup>st</sup> century AD<sup>21</sup>. It is however noteworthy that instead the wall paintings of the Ceremonial Complex of the site show a remarkable conservatism within the same religious semantic area (Betts *et al.* 2015).

The ways of iconographic transmission have been better considered in the Greek and Roman west, due to the abundance of material distributed along centuries of development (for a convenient synthesis, see Pisano & Ghedini 1997 with lit.). For instance, with regards to the transmission of mythological subjects in the Etruscan Hellenistic urns with of mid-3<sup>rd</sup> - 1<sup>st</sup> centuries BC (Pairault 1972; Van der Meer 1975), and in the Roman sarcophagi (Froning 1980; 1981) various hypotheses have been advanced including the use of gypsum casts, the use of which in Central Asia is also proven (e.g. by the Hellenistic *emblemata* of Alexandrine origin from Begram, as first argued by Adriani in 1959 - for further references, see Minardi 2015b). In Chorasmia the evidence, although limited, seems to points toward the same consuetude, as proven by a fragmentary gypsum cast of a gryphon's head from *gorodishche* Kalal̄y-ḡyr 1 of uncertain dating (mid-3<sup>rd</sup> century BC - 1<sup>st</sup> century BC, see Minardi 2015a: 97-103 with references).

### **Religious implications: an image shrine? The Akchakhan-kala context**

Bearing in mind that further archaeological investigations are needed in order to ascertain whether other portions of the unbaked-clay sculpture with *ketos* are preserved under the sands of Akchakhan-kala, there are three main elements now constituting the evidence unquestionably supporting the religious and ceremonial functions of the Ceremonial Complex of the site: the wall paintings with the likely representation of a Zoroastrian god (Grenet, in Betts *et al.* 2015); its fire altar furnished with ivory, and now the unbaked-clay relief of a sea-monster from the same fire altar area. The excavation of this area of the Ceremonial Complex has yet to be completed, but it is clear that it was abundantly decorated with unbaked-clay painted sculptures. The closest parallel always remains the chronological ensuing palace of Toprak-kala, where a series of unbaked-clay sculptures has been found. In particular, in the main niche of Room 14 ("Hall of the Dancing Masks"), a lion paw and parts of a female dress

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<sup>21</sup> For a preliminary consideration of the other Hellenistic material from the site, see Minardi 2015a: 103-113.

were discovered (Rapoport & Nerazik 1984: 83, Fig. 41), and identified by KhAEE archaeologists as the remains of a depiction of the goddess Anāhitā (*ib.* 85 - in Central Asia the goddess on lion is usually identified as Anāhitā/Nana, see Azarpay 1976; Potts 2001; Ambos 2003; Ghose 2006; on Anāhitā, see also Chaumont 1965; Grenet & Marshak 1998). At Akchakhan-kala there is no clear evidence of figures associated to the *ketos*, although a fragment of modelled sculpture in shape of human feet has been unearthed in the same area, now waiting for restoration (Betts, pers. comm.).

As for the Indian *makara*, the Chorasmian *ketos* is undoubtedly associated with waters and with their symbolic and religious facets (*supra* on the Greek mythology to which is related). The *makara* “is the emblem of the waters, the plants, the entire vegetal substratum of life; and in this connection it is thought to serve its primary artistic function as the vehicle (*vāhana*) of the River Goddess Gaṅgā” (Darian 1976). Even the association *ketos*/goddess in Central Asia is assured by the painting of Pendjikent Temple II, where the enthroned female divinity is four-armed (an Indian influence), and her domain is symbolized by a *ketos* at her feet (from six to seven centuries older than the Chorasmian one).

Hence, due to the context of the Chorasmian unbaked-clay *ketos* and based on the discussed evidence, we are probably at the presence of the remains of a cultic depiction of a god or more likely a goddess associated with waters. Considering, moreover, that the god depicted on the southern wall of the hypostyle hall of the Ceremonial Complex is probably the god Srōsh, and that in his Avestan hymn (*Yasht* 11, 4) the god is hailed as protector of those who are crossing rivers, a connection of the Akchakhan-kala divinities with waters seems very likely, and in consequences with the Oxus (as already noted by Tolstov for Chorasmia - Tolstov 1948a: 200).

That the Oxus was sacred in the polity is known, not only because the Muslim scholar al-Bīrūnī wrote that in Chorasmia “the 10th [of the month of Ispandārmājī] is a feast called Wakhsh-Angām. Wakhsh is the name of the angel who has to watch over the water and especially over the river Oxus” (Biruni, *Chronology* transl. Sachau 1879: 225), but also by reason of the Chorasmian epigraphic evidence which also attests the local use of theonyms related to Wakhsh/the Oxus (Livshits in Rapoport & Nerazik 1984: 258; Livshits in Vainberg 2003: 190), similarly to Bactriana (Ai-Khanoum, Rapin & Grenet 1983; Takht-i Sangin, where the god took the local and Hellenic form of Marsyas, see Litvinskiĭ & Pichikyan 1995; 2000: 312-324; see also Boyce & Grenet 1991: 179-180), both

countries, along with Sogdiana, crossed and connected by the same river and with the same Eastern-Iranian cultural background. According to the ethnographic data gathered by the KhAEE the Oxus River was yet connected in modern times with an ancient and local cult of fertility (Snezarev 1979: 187-203), datum associated by Tolstov and colleagues with the invocation of *Arədvī Sūrā Anāhitā*, (*Yasht* 5), the heavenly river and goddess of the waters invoked in the Avesta and worshipped for fecundity (on *Anāhitā*, *Aredvi* and their association, see Boyce 1988; 1982: 216-217; Boyce *et al.* 1989; Boyce & Grenet 1991: 245, 271; see also Kellens 2003-2004).

Among the divinities of the Kushan pantheon — so only approximately in contemporary with the creation of the *ketos* image in Chorasmia<sup>22</sup> — the god Oaxsho (i.e. Wakhsh) represented with a dolphin in his lap (Rosenfield 1967: 74-75, 92) is the personification/guardian of the river Oxus, while Ardoxsho/Aši, the fertility goddess subject to *interpretatio* with *Fortuna/Tyche*, daughter of Ahura Mazda and sister of Srōsh, Rashnu and Mithra (*Yasht* 17, 16 - the gods of justice), has been only tentatively associated with water and moisture<sup>23</sup>, not specifically with the Oxus but to *Aredvi* (Harmatta 1960; see also the Bactrian inscription of Ayrtaṃ where a Pharro-Ardoxsho cult image seems to have been related with a river - Harmatta 1994: 317-319; 423-424; on the identification of Ardoxsho with Aši, also *yazatā* of Fortune, see Boyce *et al.* 1989; Boyce & Grenet 1991: 160).

But these Kushan divinities do not have any animal vehicle resembling the *ketos*, and as abovementioned, Nana/*Anāhitā* usually mounts a lion, as in the corpus of Chorasmian silver bowls with decorated *emblemata*. Thus, it may be assumed that Chorasmia adopted, during the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC - 1<sup>st</sup> century AD, a representation for a river/water goddess belonging to the local Iranian pantheon derived from a western-based iconographic model of the Nereids on sea-creatures/marine *thiasos*. Speculatively, this still unknown Chorasmian goddess was enthroned on this *ketos*/vehicle as most of the divinities attested throughout Antiquity in Central Asian, including

<sup>22</sup> Kanishka's first year or reign is either 78 AD or 127/128 AD. For a synthesis on the debated question regarding Kushan chronology, see Loeschener 2012.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Grenet & Marshak 1998: 8-9 with reference to Henning (1944) and Grenet (1998): the curse cited in the Manichean fragment M 393 consists in "the absence of moisture", intended as fields idled by drought.

Chorasmia. Whether this deity was previously represented through other artistic languages or whether her iconography was created only after the collision with an alien culture, remains unknown. In addition, we should not underestimated the possibility of the existence of divinities from the semi-nomadic/Eastern Iranian substratum of the Chorasmians (Carter's "Scytho-Saka" river goddess - Carter 1992)<sup>24</sup>, taking into account the chronic absence of literary sources that hopefully will be compensated with additional archaeological finds. But the iconography, some stylistic elements and the technique of the *ketos* are, chronologically speaking but not only, Hellenistic.

### Preliminary conclusions

It is clear that the iconography and the style of the Chorasmia *ketos* cannot be tracked elsewhere than within a Hellenistic environment, most likely Central Asian. The historical background of Akchakhan-kala points toward a cultic semantic of the modelled sculpture — unless we want to consider these fragments from the Main Altar Area of the *gorodishche* a mere and standing-alone decoration of some sort. Its marine nature assures an association with water divinities, divinities that in Chorasmia ought to be associated on their own with the Oxus. The link with the river Oxus and the manufacture of the unbaked-clay *ketos* (modelled and painted), in my opinion points toward a connection with Bactriana. Unless in future excavations of the area some epigraphic evidence will be found in relationship with other fragments of the *ketos* composition, or with other modelled sculptures, we will probably never know the name of the local (Zoroastrian?) divinity associated with this attribute/vehicle, a marine creature with an Hellenistic appearance that did not appear in Central Asia before the 3<sup>rd</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup> century BC. It remains, however, astonishing how in Sogdiana a *ketos*, transformed but loyal to its iconographical origin, is still represented several centuries later at Pendjikent with a female goddess (four-armed as in India) whose domain is possible to infer by its presence. In general, it seems that in Chorasmia and Sogdiana tradition was regarded as very important factor, notwithstanding the receptiveness of these two

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<sup>24</sup> For a recent comparative study on Indo-European river-goddesses, see Saadi-Nejad 2013.



countries where both visual and religious notions contain a diachronic stratification of different layers (e.g. on religion Grenet & Marshak 1998).

The “portrait gallery” painted in the corridors of the Ceremonial Complex of Akchakhan-kala seems to support the idea of a sacred image relative to a water-deity in the site: most of the figures, when their necks are preserved, show a torque with a terminal appendix in shape of “zoomorphic terminals” (Kidd 2011: 246-248; see also Kidd & Betts 2010: fig. 7), which in my opinion possibly are *kētē* (fig. 6). The torque itself is a status symbol which belongs to the steppes — but not only<sup>25</sup> — and interesting enough the style of most of the wall paintings of the Ceremonial Complex is distant from Hellenistic art<sup>26</sup>, if not for some iconographic elements such as the mural crown of Srōsh (Minardi in Betts *et al.* 2015) that contrasts with this 1<sup>st</sup> century BC - 1<sup>st</sup> century AD figure almost Achaemenid in its appearance (e.g. his “false profile”, the two belts that the god wears etc.). It seems then that during the Antique 2 (formerly “Kangyui”) Chorasmian *facies* the country’s strong tradition was sided by a lively innovative component: the general transformation of Central Asia with the Seleucids ignited even in the remote Chorasmia a change in the material culture of the country (Minardi 2015a) and the *ketos*, contemporary with the Srōsh, is a perfect paragon that illustrates this cultural climate.

The *ketos* high-relief ought to have been placed on the southern side of the plinth that “shielded” the altar from a direct access; on the other sides fire features are attested (Pl. 3). The layout of this unexcavated and so still unknown portion of Ceremonial Complex has still to be understood, but the close presence in the main altar area of the *ketos* relief and of what possibly might be the king’s fire, bring us to witness a remarkable association of the water and fire, two fundamental elements of the Zoroastrian *Yasna* “inner” liturgy (Darrow 1988).

<sup>25</sup> E.g. see the Achaemenid specimens from the Oxus Treasure (Curtis 2005: 139-140; see also Musche 1988: 277-285) - although the closest specimens to the painted Chorasmian torques remain scytho-sacan (e.g. Fedorov-Dav̇idov 1976: 48, no. 33); but see also the Thracian bowl from Yakimovo, Bulgaria (Cat. Cologne 1979: 198, nos. 413 and 418). For the Parthian evidence, see Musche 1992: 321-323; Kidd 2011 - The Parthians, i.e. the Aparnii/Dahae of the written sources shared a very similar cultural background with the Chorasmians (Minardi 2015a: 45-46 with references).

<sup>26</sup> But a Hellenistic influence can be discerned in other fragments not belonging to the “portrait series”, see for instance the three-quarter figure in Kidd *et al.* 2004: 85; Kidd 2011: 258. For other evidence and considerations, see Minardi 2015a.

Western models inspired the Central Asian artists who worked at the Chorasmian high-relief, and for the first time - as postulated some decades ago by Soviet scholars (D'yakonova & Smirnova 1967; Marshak 1986: 243) — we finally have evidence, although fragmentary, of one of those cultic images that inspired the Chorasmian toreutics and the Sogdian wall paintings of Late Antiquity, in a significant continuum of iconographic transmission and further elaboration. And this evidence is unexpectedly coming from Chorasmia.

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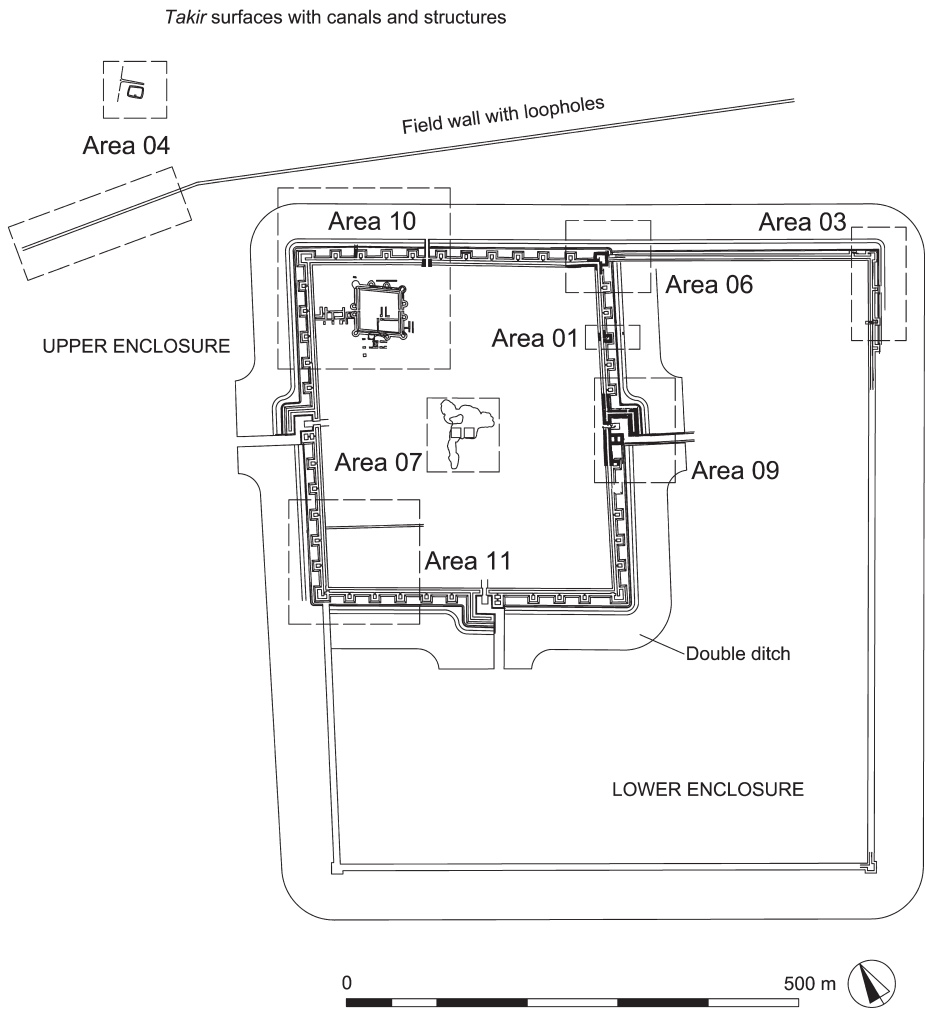
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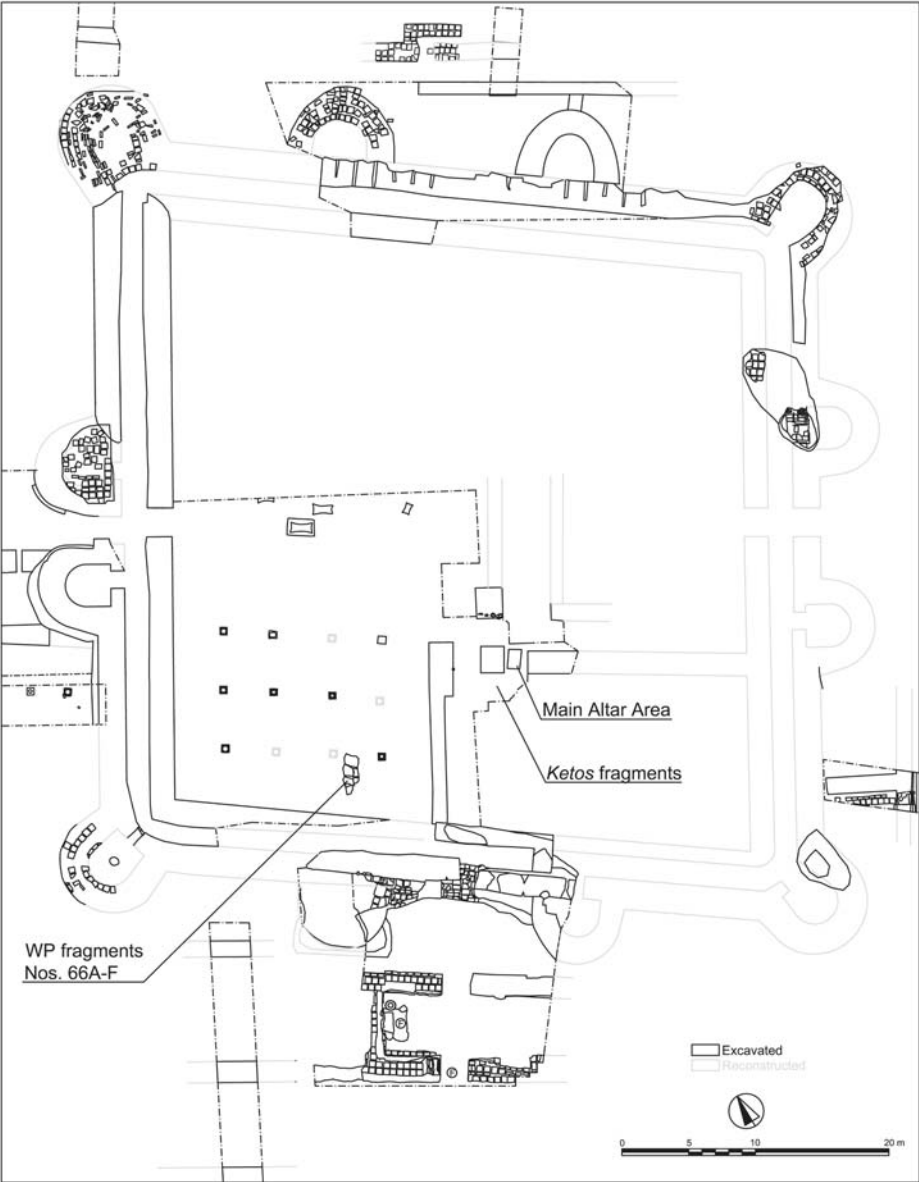
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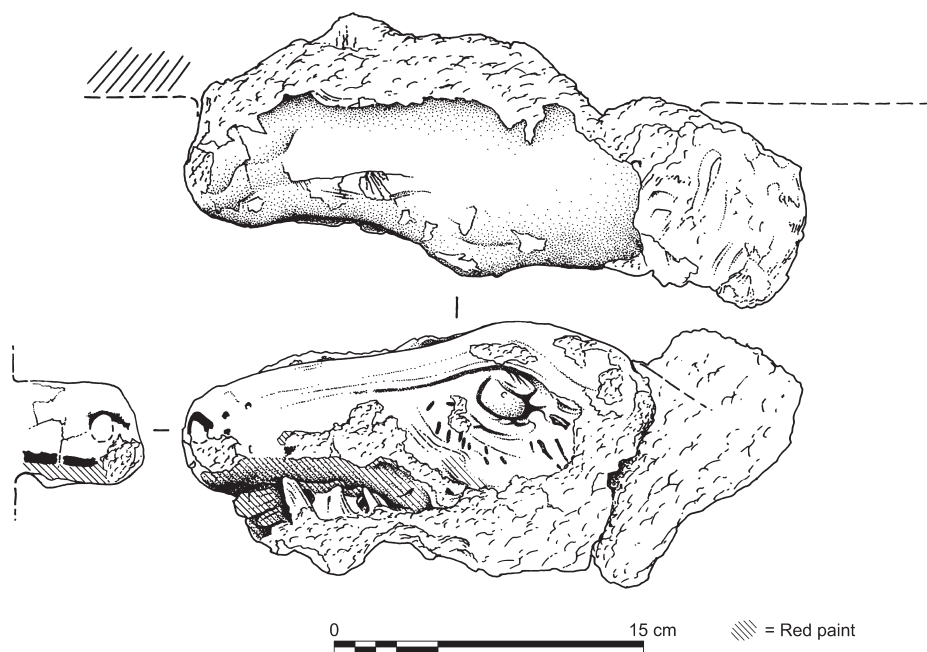
Pl. 2. General plan of Akchakhan-kala with excavation areas.



Pl. 3. Plan of the Central Building of the Ceremonial Complex of Akchakhan-kala (Area 10) with location of finds.



Pl. 4 a & b. The two fragments of *ketos* from the Ceremonial Complex of Akchakhan-kala.



Pl. 5. Drawing of the Chorasmian *ketos*' head (by D.W. Hopkins).



## NEW EVIDENCE OF ZOROASTRIAN ICONOGRAPHY OF THE LATE PARTHIAN PERIOD

BY

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**Abstract:** Among several small objects found within the ruins of the fire temple excavated by the Turkmen-Polish team at Mele Hairam were four small bone plaques of the late Parthian period. Although badly preserved, these plaques are important both as evidence of ancient Zoroastrian iconography and as unique scenes depicting ritual acts that were performed inside the fire temple.

**Keywords:** Zoroastrian iconography, Late Parthian, fire temple, Mele Hairam

Conducted by the Turkmen-Polish team between 1997 and 2009, excavation at Mele Hairam, the site located in the Serakhs oasis of southern Turkmenistan (fig. 1), revealed the remnants of a Zoroastrian fire temple dating back to the first - fourth centuries AD. Several cultic installations uncovered inside the temple building provide valuable information for the reconstruction of ancient fire worship patterns. The same contributory role can be ascribed to images engraved on four small bone plaques of the late Parthian period, that were found within the fallen brick debris of the southern temple sector. The place where the plaques were found and how poorly they are preserved both suggest that the object they once adorned, now unreconstructable, had been destroyed already in ancient times, rendering the plaques useless. As such, they had been thrown away from the temple enclosure. Although badly damaged and incomplete, these finds are noteworthy as they belong to a very scanty collection of ancient Zoroastrian iconographic evidence.

The first of four plaques (inv. no. MH08-12802-1) contains a rather crudely incised image of a fire holder supporting a bowl with flames rising from it (fig. 2). The flames are surrounded by an arc composed of a row of dotted circles between two lines, which probably stands for an architectural element. A shaft of the fire holder is decorated with alternately arranged dotted or hatched strips. Both the way in which the fire bowl is depicted (different from the frontal convention of Parthian art) and the



Fig. 1. Map of Turkmenistan with location of the Serakhs oasis.

decoration of the altar's shaft allude to the art of the Kushan empire. Those are not the only manifestations of close relations of the Serakhs oasis with the Kushan empire. Other, and probably more obvious are: an ivory plaque, with an iconography and style linking it to the group of ivory and bone items belonging to the so-called Begram Treasure (Kornacka 2010) and a bone figurine of *yakshi* — a female tree and earth spirit, a symbol of fertility worshipped by the Hindu, Buddhist, and Jain faiths, both found at Mele Hairam (Kaim 2012).

The second bone plaque (inv. no. MH08-12802-2) is decorated with a representation of a crescent-topped stand flanked by two vessels, with three lines or batons below to the right (fig. 3). Despite considerable damage of the plaque surface, the vessels can be readily recognized as mortars with pestles, while the stand is certainly a *mah-rui* for its almost unmodified shape that has continued to the present (fig. 4).<sup>1</sup> As mortars and *mah-rui* are typical ritual implements used by Zoroastrian priests during sacred ceremonies, it seems legitimate to ascribe the same function to the batons

<sup>1</sup> It is worth highlighting that we have here the earliest depiction yet known of a *mah-rui*. As a matter of fact depictions and archaeological finds of *mah-rui* are very rare. A *mah-rui* of stone was found inside of a Sasanian building of *chahar taq* type near Hajiabad in eastern Fars (Azarnoush1994: 33-35, figs. 119-20).

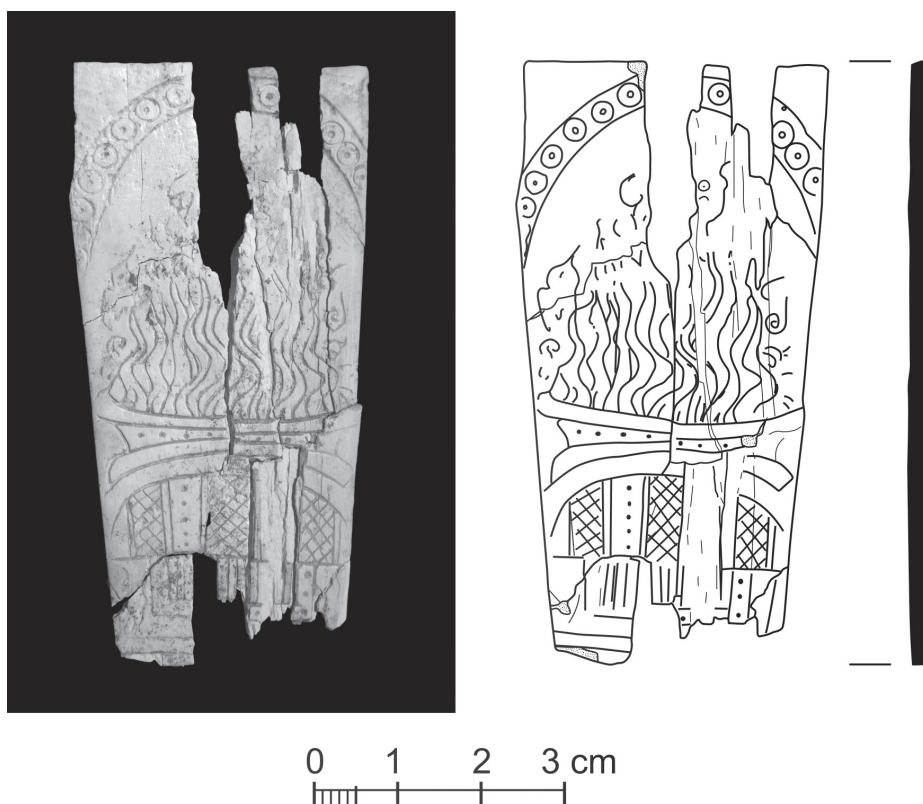


Fig. 2. Mele Hairam. Bone plaque inv. no. MH08-12802-1. Fire holder with a bowl for the sacred fire. Dimensions: 7.20 cm (max. preserved height); 3.60 cm (max. preserved width); 0.21 cm (depth).

and view them as belonging to a *barsom* or a bundle of rods or twigs. Modern Zoroastrian rituals usually use the *barsom* bundle placed across the pair of *mah-rui*. Our plaque is incomplete but the alleged absence of another *mah-rui* can actually be true and result from the lack of free space, or an artisan's incapability of presenting several items within a limited space. Anyway, the presence of mortars in addition to the *mah-rui* suggests that the scene shows implements for any ceremony that involves the crushing of *haoma*-twigs (*Yasna*, *Visperad* or *Vendidad*). But again, the number of mortars on our plaque is unique considering modern Zoroastrian practices as reference; today just one metal mortar is used during ritual ceremonies. Zoroastrian religious texts remain almost totally silent as far as

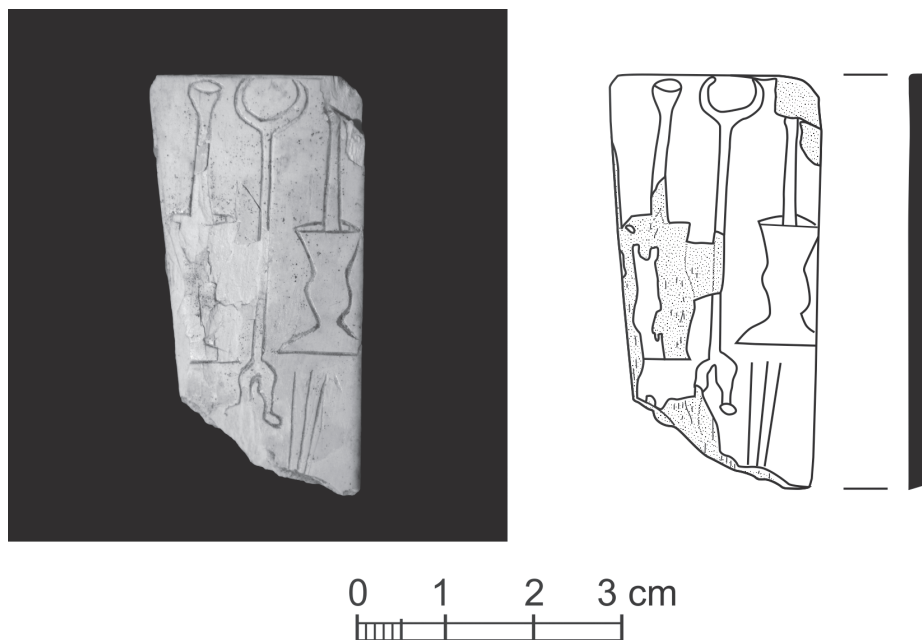


Fig. 3. Mele Hairam. Bone plaque: inv. no. MH08-12802-2. Ritual implements. Dimensions: 4.60 cm (max. preserved height); 2.40 cm (max. preserved width); 0.20 cm (depth).



Fig. 4. Zoroastrian modern ritual implements: *barsom* and *mah-rui*. <http://www.avesta.org/ritual/barsom.htm>

guidelines are concerned for the compulsory number of mortars. It is in the Younger Avesta only where two mortars are mentioned in ritualistic contexts (*Vd* 10, 1; 11, 2; 12, 2; *Y.* 22, 1; 24, 2, 7; 25, 2). Still, M. Boyce found these mentions as referring to the transitional period when stone mortars were gradually replaced by those of metal (Boyce 1970: 28). However, this path followed by M. Boyce does not have to necessarily be valid given the Persepolis Treasury where both green chert and bronze mortars with pestle sets were found, which proves concurrent use of stone and metal mortars at least during the Achaemenid period (Schmidt 1957: 53-56, 102, pls. 23, 80).<sup>2</sup> Therefore, the Mele Hairam plaque can actually catch the point in history, i.e. late Parthian period, when two mortars, whether of stone or metal, or both, were still used instead of one.

Sharing the same archaeological context, our third fragmentary plaque (inv. no. MH08-12802-3) is just slightly different in terms of decoration from those described above, as it contains a partly preserved depiction of a male figure wearing a long robe falling in pleats, with a belt at the waist (fig. 5). The male is shown standing in front of an hourglass-like object and holding the *barsom*. Given the characteristic shape and depictions on the first plaque, the object can be safely identified with a mortar. Nevertheless, any attempt to reconstruct the full scene once incised on the plaque is too risky on account of its preservation. But, with an insight into ancient Iranian art, it still remains feasible to infer a function of the male figure.

The earliest representations of a male figure holding the *barsom* date to the Achaemenid period. Depicted on seals, the figure standing before an altar of fire is usually shown accompanied by another male figure, the latter being most probably engaged in some sacred fire-relating activities. Both figures are shown wearing the “Median costume” that consists of trousers and a knee-length tunic (Merrillees 2005: no. 75; Schmidt 1957: 26, pl. 7). The costume often includes a coat, known to ancient Greeks as *kandys*, which can vary in length but is invariably worn with its long empty sleeves hanging down on either side (Schmidt 1957: 26, pl. 7; Parrot 1961: 208, fig. 260; Akurgal 1961: 174, fig. 123). Details of a headdress are

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<sup>2</sup> As seen from the Aramaic texts inscribed with ink on mortars, pestles and plates of green chert were given as tribute for a particular regnal year (Naveh & Shaked 1973: 445-57).



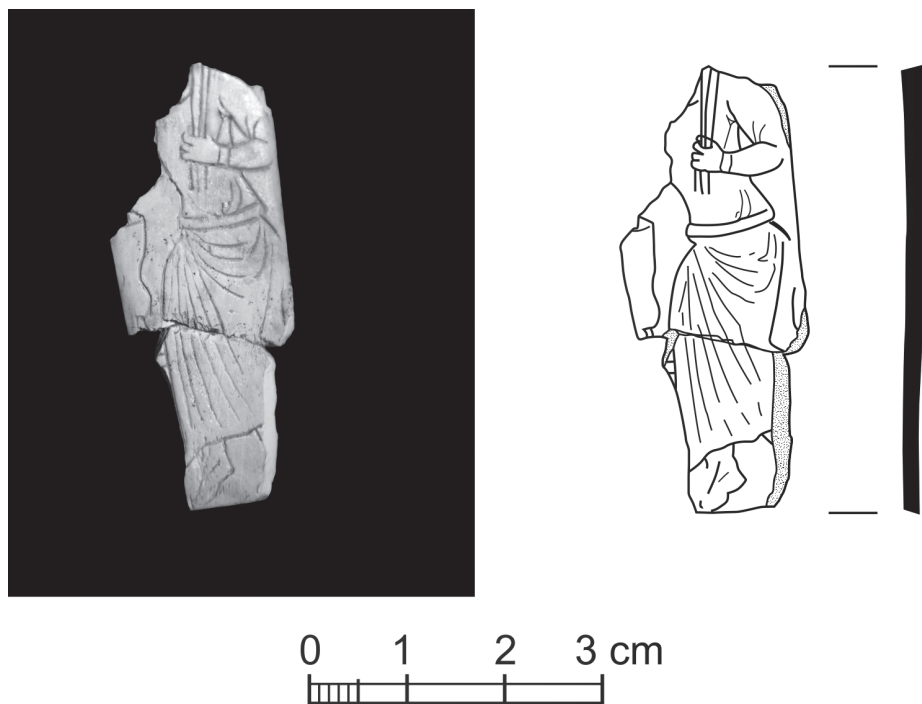


Fig. 5. Mele Hairam. Bone plaque inv. no. MH08-12802-3. Zoroastrian priest in front of the mortar. Dimensions: 4.6 cm (max. preserved height); 1.80 cm (max. preserved width); 0.20 cm (depth).

obscure, but the general outlines of what is a hood with a long neck guard and side-flaps, which cover ears, cheeks, and chin are recognizable<sup>3</sup>.

Images of a male figure with the *barsom* are also known from reliefs of Achaemenid date. Two male figures standing side by side, each holding the *barsom* in his left hand, the right being raised in the gesture of reverence, or adoration are represented on the well-known relief found at the village of Egili, in the area of Daskyleion, the capital of the Phrygian satrapy. Both male figures are shown wearing a *kandys* over shoulders as well as a soft headgear folded on top of the head and enveloping the ears

<sup>3</sup> It is important to distinguish between the scenes of adoration of the sacred fire where worshipers, mostly in Persian costume, raise their hand in a repeated gesture of reverence (similarly as Achaemenid kings of kings on their tombs) and scenes quoted in this article where a ritual act is suggested by the presence of the *barsom* or other ritual paraphernalia in the hands of main actors.

and chin. The entire scene is believed to be the sacrifice of animals to the Yazata Haoma performed by priests (Macridy 1913: 348-52, fig. 4, pl. VIII; Ghirshman 1964: 347, fig. 440).

It is far more difficult to provide an interpretation if a male figure with the *barsom* is depicted standing alone, with no additional indication of any action he is involved in. This is the case for the seal impression from Daskyleion, showing a male figure, who is holding the *barsom* with his right and a long thin staff with the left hand (Akurgal 1961: 174, fig. 123). The figure is wearing trousers, *kandys*, and a specific headdress type with a half-round top bent to one side and a slight protrusion above the forehead and at the back of the head. Similar headdress arrangement can be observed on the obverse of coins of Sabakes (ca. 333 B.C.E) and Mazakes (ca. 333/2 B.C.E), the two last Achaemenian satraps of Egypt (Alram 1986: 118, pl. 12.377), as well as on numerous so-called Greco-Persian seals (see CAH 4, 1988, figs. 78c, 79b, 79d, 86c). Whereas a similar staff is always present in the hand of male figures leading the gift-bearing delegations depicted on the stairs of the Apadana in Persepolis (for example Schmidt 1953: pls. 33-39).

A figure with *barsom* and a long thin staff also appears on a relief from Daskyleion (Büsing-Kolbe 1978: 120-121). Regrettably, the relief is damaged to the extent that it is impossible to identify the function of structure the male figure is standing in front of.

Yet one more example of unaccompanied male figures holding the *barsom* is on a stone altar from Bünyan, Cappadocia (now in the Museum of Anatolian Civilizations, Ankara) (Akurgal 1961: 173, fig. 120; Bittel 1956: 32-42). On three sides of the altar, there is a male figure, holding the *barsom* in his right hand, and a cup in the left. He is wearing trousers, a *kandys* which is thrown over his shoulders, and a cap similar to these worn by the priests on the Daskyleion reliefs, however side flaps of the Bünyan cap do not cover the quite impressive beard.

Depictions of male figures with the *barsom* are also recorded among items belonging to the Oxus Treasure. At least twenty-four golden plaques show the motif in question. However, male figures of the Oxus Treasure show diversity in clothing unseen in any of the examples described above. The figures are depicted wearing trousers but, while most of them are in a belted tunic, whether plain or decorated, only three of them have a plain or decorated *kandys* draped on the shoulders (Curtis, Searight & Cowell, 2003: figs 4/21-23). Also, several headdress types are distinguishable but

three main variants of a hood or cap prevail, always covering the head, neck (with long-pointed neck guard) ears, cheeks, and chin. Further all of those headdresses appear to be made of some more or less soft cloth. The only difference among them is in arrangement of the hood's tip. The first variant is a hoop with a long tip hanging down at the back of the head. It shows strong similarity to that worn by members of Delegation IV on the stairs of the Apadana and, by some "servants" on the Darius Palace reliefs at Persepolis (Schmidt 1953: pl. 30). The second variant is a headgear surmounted by a tip of half-rounded shape, bent to a side, whereby it is similar to the headdress on the Daskyleion seal impression. The third variant is unique by its angular shape, occasionally with a slight front projection. The variant seems to be a slight modification of the headdress seen in figures with the *barsom* on the above-mentioned group of Achaemenid seals, and some male figures on the stairs of the Council Hall at Persepolis (Schmidt 1953: pl. 86).

Most figures on the Oxus plaques are rather crudely designed which makes the identification of details difficult. However, it seems that only one male figure holding the *barsom* has his mouth covered with a mask (Curtis, Searight & Cowell 2003: fig. 4/24), while not more than two are depicted with a short sword *akinakes* hanging from a belt (Curtis, Searight & Cowell 2003: figs. 3/18, 4/24).

The presence of *akinakes* raises the question whether Zoroastrian priests of the past could have carried swords or not. The practice of wearing *akinakes* is attested among priests of post-Sasanian times; however, it has been never confirmed for an earlier period. For this reason, M. Boyce found it conceivable that the sword-wearing male figures with *barsom* on gold plaques from the Oxus Treasure are noblemen performing an act of worship (Boyce 1982: 148). Persepolis reliefs (Schmidt 1953: pls. 73-74) as well as satrapal coins (Curtis 2010: fig. 35.31) indeed suggest that the *kandys* served as a mark of status or rank. Also, headgears of the male figures holding the *barsom* on the Oxus items often resemble headgears of Achaemenid noblemen. Thus, the interpretation suggested by M. Boyce could be considered justified. However, the most important point here seems to be the absence of representations showing the Achaemenid king using the *barsom* in the acts of worship. Assuming the commonly accepted view that Achaemenid nobles mirrored kings to any extent possible, it is hardly probable that the male with the *barsom* is a noble and not a clergyman. So the *barsom* should be considered as an insignia of the Iranian

priesthood of the Achaemenid period rather than a simple accessory for prayers. With numerous references to the noble attire, the priestly costume indicates that the position of Achaemenid priests was rather high. Differences observed in headdress as well as the presence or absence of a *kandys* may depend on a local tradition, or a priest's function or rank in the religious hierarchy.

The specific mode of wearing a coat with long narrow sleeves hanging empty or the *kandys*, which occurs very often in Achaemenid art, is attested later only on the very first coins of local kings of Persis, the *frataraka* (Aram 1986: types 511-514; Curtis 2010) and, on the Parthian coins (Sellwood 1971). However, under the *frataraka* and under the Parthians, the *kandys* is no longer worn by people holding the *barsom*. The best examples are the male figures with the *barsom* on the east stone window jamb of the so-called Frataraka Temple, near Persepolis (Herzfeld 1941: 286, pl. LXXXVI; Schmidt 1953: fig.17 A), and the male figure on a cliff wall underneath the rock-cut tomb at Dokhan-e Davoud in Kurdistan, both dressed in a long open-front coat, with hands inside the sleeves (Gall 1972: Taf. 74. 4) and similar headgear except a diadem encircling the head of the figure on the 'Frataraka Temple' relief. The figure holding the *barsom* in front of a fire holder represented on the reverse of the coins issued by Darev II, Ardaxshir II and Vahshir, that is, after the Pars province submitted to the Arsacids, is not wearing the *kandys* but a long robe, which seems to have no opening at the front. His headgear is shown in such a sketchy manner that we cannot be sure whether it repeats that of the king on the obverse. However, given the fact that, on some coins, the ribbons of the diadem are discernible behind the head of the figure, his royal designation seems plausible<sup>4</sup>. If we accept such identification, the iconography of the Frataraka coin series and the 'Frataraka Temple' relief may be considered as reflecting changes in both royal and religious ideology because for the first time we see a king using the *barsom* while worshipping (contrary to M. Boyce 1991: 265, 331).

However, neither the Frataraka relief nor the representations on the coins suggest any religious ritual except for a possible prayer recited with the *barsom*. By contrast, the presence of a mortar on the plaque from Mele Hairam points strongly to an act of crushing of haoma, during the Yasna or Visperad or Vendidad ceremony. It seems therefore highly probable that

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<sup>4</sup> This figure is interpreted as a priest (magus) by D. T. Potts (2007: 276), but as a *frataraka* or shah by D. Stronach (1978: 135).

a male figure depicted on the plaque is a priest. Moreover, the three ceremonies are inner rituals and, as such, can only be performed by priests inside a *yazishn-gah* or a dedicated room set aside for service in the temple building. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that both the depiction showing a priest holding the *barsom* and standing in front of the mortar, and the depiction of the mortars, *mah-rui*, and *barsom* are relating to activities that take place nowhere else but in the *yazishn-gah*, while the fire holder of our first plaque is, obviously, inside the main temple room.

Provided that the interpretation given herein is correct, we can assume that the two males (fig. 6) shown on the fourth plaque (inv. no. MH08-12802-4) are members of a congregation who came to the temple to participate in religious ceremonies. Both are shown wearing a typical Parthian costume marked by a belted knee-length tunic, and loose trousers that are falling in folds to be gathered into soft ankle boots fastened with long ribbon ties. Moreover, the male to the right is shown wearing a coat opened in front. He is shown in a somehow awkward three-quarter front view, which is probably the reason why a wide decorative band can only be seen on his left trouser leg. The male is shown with his left hand resting on the hilt of the long sword hanging on the belt. The belt passes from behind the scabbard slide and then is joined with the forward end of the belt in front of the sword with the help of a round, plain clasp, from which one end of the belt hangs down. The same belt can be seen secured around the hips of the second male figure. He is shown in a frontal view with the left side of his body missing as a result of a poor layout and no room left on the plaque. A tunic of the male has a wide band down the centre, decorated with dots that are probably marking gems or pearls. Rich costumes and swords suggest that both males were of high standing.

It remains to consider where the action in which they were involved was supposed to take place. Relatively small sizes of the fire chambers within known ancient fire temples, including the one in the magnificent temple of Takht-e Suleiman (Nauman 1977: Abb. 24,37) which was as a pilgrimage destination, suggest that the congregation was not admitted directly before the sacred fire. Thus, it can be assumed that our plaque depicts an action that was taking place in a room preceding the chamber with the fire holder.

Described above, all plaques are decorated using the same, very simple technique of engraving with a stylus and, as such, difficult to dating. However a close examination of postures and costumes of males depicted on the plaques gives some useful guidelines. Thus, the priest in the three-quarter



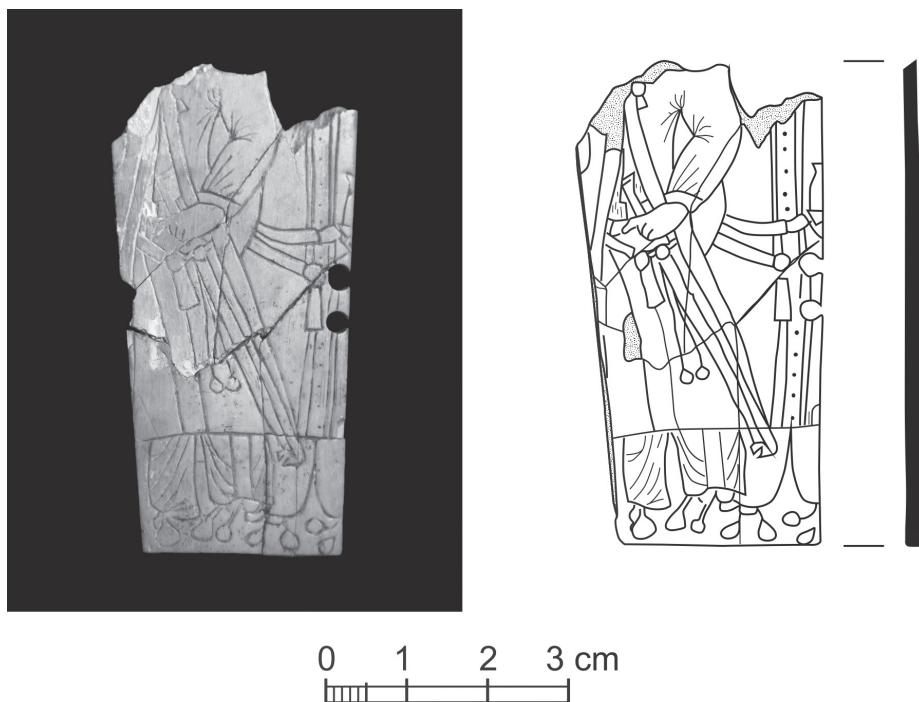


Fig. 6. Mele Hairam. Bone plaque inv. no. MH08-12802-4. Worshipers. Dimensions: 6.10 cm (max. preserved height); 3.0 cm (max. preserved width); 0.20 cm (depth).

front view, with his feet in profile and toes pointed downward, has parallels in the art of Mesopotamia and western Iran of the late Parthian period (first-third century C.E.) (Mathiesen 1992: 58-60, figs. 50-51, 54). The same date is suggested by richly decorated costumes of the males depicted on the fourth plaque. It is therefore probable that this small group of plaques dates between the first and the third centuries C.E. or the Late Parthian period. The plaques (together with the temple from Mele Hairam) thus prove that in this time the Zoroastrianism religion was well established within the Arsacid empire. We have here the earliest yet known visual depiction of the *mah-rui*, which survived in the same form till modern times. The representations of other ritual paraphernalia such as mortar and *barsom* are already attested since the Achaemenid period but the practice of using two mortars has been given up some time later. The essential aspect of our plaques is, however, that the scenes they depict show ritual acts that were performed inside a fire temple. As such, the plaques constitute a unique collection.

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## VOLOGASES I, PAKOROS II AND ARTABANOS III: COINS AND PARTHIAN HISTORY<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract:** This article focuses on certain aspects of Parthian coinage under Vologases I (51-79) and Pakoros II (78-110). Most studies convey a picture of extreme political confusion in Parthia at the close of Vologases I's reign to that of the beginning of Pakoros II's. They also tend to clump together Vologases I, "Vologases II", Artabanos III, and Pakoros II as though they were all rival kings, each striving to usurp the throne. Changes in the minting practice of the Arsacids were strictly connected with political transformations that were occurring in Parthia at that time. Any attribution of coin types along with an analysis of the nature of monetary issues depends on an accurate reconstruction of the political developments that effected them.

**Keywords:** Arsacids, Parthian coinage, Vologases I, Pakoros I, Artabanos III

This article focuses on certain aspects of Parthian coinage under Vologases I (51-79) and Pakoros II (78-110). Changes in the minting practice of the Arsacids were strictly connected with political transformations that were occurring in Parthia at that time. Any attribution of coin types along with an analysis of the nature of monetary issues (including new royal titles, kings' names or insignia) depends on an accurate reconstruction of the political developments that effected them, an area subject to impassioned controversy and prone to shaky conclusions. One of the chief aprioristic assumptions some specialists tend to adopt is the belief that any temporal overlap of monetary issues is a sure indication of internal strife in Parthia. This applies especially to the period from the close of Vologases

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I's reign to that of the beginning of Pakoros II's.<sup>2</sup> The issue of S72 coinage overlaps for a period of time with the first issues of Pakoros II S73 (S = Sellwood 1980). Researchers using this concurrence mistakenly speculate that S72 coinage was minted by a usurper whom they identify as "Vologases II" in order to conclude that around 79-80 there was a civil war in Parthia, involving Pakoros II, Vologases I, and perhaps a certain Vologases II.<sup>3</sup> In addition, Artabanos III, the issuer of S74 coinage, comes into play as the supposed rival of Pakoros II. To establish a more accurate chronology of the political developments in the 70s and 80s and to ascertain a more reliable attribution of S72 issues, we must reconsider several problems. First, we need to determine the relation of S72 coins to Vologases I's issues. Secondly, we must identify the issuer of S72 coinage, taking into account the historical context in which events occurred. Lastly, we will need to reconstruct the interactions between Vologases I and Pakoros II.<sup>4</sup>

Under Vologases I (51-79) the Parthian Empire was in military terms substantially strengthened and entered a phase of considerable military might. The legacy that Vologases inherited from his predecessors was a series of conflicts that had been ravaging the Arsacid empire for half a century. The weakness of the central authority in the state had encouraged a number of rebellions, especially in Babylonia, Hyrcania, and Sakastan involving the Indo-Parthians. Vologases' first moves reflect his dynastic policy: he was astute enough to share power with two of his brothers. He placed Pakoros, the elder one, in charge of Media Atropatene and he assigned his younger brother, Tiridates, Armenia, while Vologases ruled as the King of Kings (Jos. *Ant.* 20.74; Tac. *Ann.* 12.50; 15.2; 15.31). Vologases' principal adversary on the domestic front was the Dahae-Hyrcanian faction. The distribution of power within the Arsacid clan

<sup>2</sup> See, e.g., Sellwood 1983: 295: "Dated tetradrachms show a continuous conflict for two years between Pacorus and Vologases, concluded with the disappearance of Vologases." See also Karras-Klapproth 1988: 199; Schippmann 1980: 59.

<sup>3</sup> See McDowell 1935: 229 ("A revolt against Vologases I broke out under the leadership of Pacorus II in the spring of 78"); Bivar 1983: 86.

<sup>4</sup> These issues were systematically explored by the author in Olbrycht 1999. That article relied on a paper that I had delivered at the University of Münster in 1995. In addition, I dealt with the joint rule of Vologases I and Pakoros II, and the attribution of S72 to Vologases I in Olbrycht 1997: 32. Sinisi 2012 (see his comments on p. 163) largely relies on my work concerning these topics. For a review of Sinisi's study, see Olbrycht 2013a: 280-284.



helped Vologases govern the empire more effectively, since the brothers formed a mighty political bloc which provided Parthia with a strong central core comprising Greater Media, Atropatene, Babylonia and (northern) Mesopotamia, allowing Vologases to embark on campaigns to consolidate his dominions. Armenia, which was to become an integral part of his empire, was key from the very beginning. By putting Tiridates on the Armenian throne, Vologases was harking back to the policy pursued by Artabanos II (Olbrycht 1998a: 140-141; Wolski 1987), who had appointed his sons rulers of Armenia, in the face of Roman opposition (see Dąbrowa 1983: 131-176; Olbrycht 1998b). Vologases turned out to be a challenging opponent for the Roman emperors Claudius, Nero, and Vespasian. Vologases I's imperial policy was continued by his successor, Pakoros II (ca. 78-110), whose political initiatives extended to Dacia in the west, the lands of the Sarmatians in the north, and China in the east (for details, see Olbrycht 1998: 176-190; 1998b: 125-138).

Vologases I's monetary issues comprise several types, the largest of which are tetradrachms and bear the date when they were issued.<sup>5</sup> The first of these dated coins ascribed to Vologases I are S68 minted in Seleukeia in 362 SE (Gorpaios) — 365 SE (Dystros), i.e. A.D. 51 (August) — A.D. 54 (February) (SE = Seleucid era.).<sup>6</sup> The obverse contains the bust of the king portrayed with a clearly visible necklet and a quadrangular medallion; the king's head is shown in profile. Curiously, there are no S68 drachms or bronzes. As we know, Parthian drachms were in circulation chiefly in Iran. It would seem more than likely that Vologases I, whose opening years on the throne were marked by military engagements in Iran and Armenia, could not have failed to mint drachms for his large army (for drachms and bronzes struck in Iranian mints, see Sinisi 2012: nos. 88A-332. For Vologases' first issues, see Sinisi 2012: 138-148). His next issues, S70, were tetradrachms minted in the 60s (373 SE = A.D. 61/62 – 380 SE = A.D. 68/69), alongside drachms and bronzes issued in Iran in the 50s and 60s (Sinisi 2012: nos. 451-495 (tetradrachms). For the drachms (type IVa), see Sinisi 2012: 159).

<sup>5</sup> The fundamental study is now Sinisi 2012. Cf. Wroth 1903: 178-189, 209-210; McDowell 1935, 74; Newell 1938, 490; Jacobsen, Mørkholm 1965: nos. 190-202; Sellwood 1980: 223-234; Sellwood 1983: 295; Shore 1993: nos. 370-393; Le Rider 1998: 29-31; Olbrycht 1999; 2013a: 280-284.

<sup>6</sup> Sinisi 2012: 136, note 137 published new S68 specimens which enable us to date the beginning of Vologases I's coinage more exactly than had previously been the case.

The titles on S68 tetradrachms and S70 drachms and tetradrachms carry the honorifics: ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΝ ΑΡΣΑΚΟΥ ΕΥΕΡΓΕΤΟΥ ΔΙΚΑΙΟΥ ΕΠΙΦΑΝΟΥΣ ΦΙΛΕΛΛΗΝΟΣ, “of Arsakes, King of Kings, the Benefactor, the Just, the God-manifest, the Philhellene.” There are no innovative details regarding the king’s attributes, which follow earlier issues. The king sports a diadem. On S68 tetradrachms he is depicted in the act of receiving the diadem from a standing goddess with a long sceptre, although on S70 coins the sceptre is replaced with a palm branch.




Fig. 1. Tetradrachmon of Vologases I. Münzkabinett der Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin. Item no. 18202786. Picture: Münzkabinett der Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin. Aufnahme durch Lutz-Jürgen Lübke. Obverse: bust of king, left. Reverse: King on throne, receives diadem from goddess. Legend [BA]CΙΑ[ΕΙΙC] ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥ[Ν] ΑΡCΑ[ΚΟΥ] ΕΥΕΡΓΕΤ[ΟΥ] ΔΙΚΑΙΟΥ ΕΠΙΦΑΝΟ[ΥC] [ΦΙΛ]ΕΛΛΗΝ[ΟC]. Year ΕΞΤ = 365 SE = A.D. 53/54. Mint Seleukeia on the Tigris. Weight 13,47 g; diameter 27 mm; die-axis 12 h. Sellwood 1980, type 68.10-11; Sinisi 2012, 258 no. 83 (this coin).

An examination of Vologases I’s monetary issues cannot preclude this monarch’s political affairs. In 51-66 Vologases’ main concerns focused on setting up his brother Tiridates in Armenia, the conflict with Rome, and the domestic struggles in Parthia. Around 54/55 a rebellion erupted under the leadership of one *filius Vardanis*, viz. the Son of Vardanes, who for four years issued his own coinage (S69) at Seleukeia on the Tigris (366-369 SE = A.D. 54/5-57/8).<sup>7</sup> This preoccupation allowed in ca. 58-61 the powerful province of Hyrcania to rebel (Olbrycht 1998: 180-183).

However, not only was Vologases I not ousted from power, but on the contrary, his hold on it increased. His greatest success was to vanquish the

<sup>7</sup> Sinisi 2012: nos. 333A-450A (Seleukeia issues). For *filius Vardanis*’ tetradrachms issued in 366 SE, see de la Föye 1904: 370; Assar 2008. Contrary to Sellwood 1980: S69, Sinisi 2012: 152 maintains that *filius Vardanis* did not mint coins in Ekbatana.

Romans in Armenia. A compromise was affected with Rome in 63, and in 66 the official coronation of Tiridates, Vologases' brother, in Rome, brought the Armenian conflict to a close. His victory over Rome gave him a tremendous propaganda boost — not surprisingly, then, new portraits and legends appeared at this time on his coinage mirroring new trends in royal ideology. These representations are seen on S71 coins, which include drachms issued at Ekbatana and Mihrdatkirt (S71.1-3; Sinisi 2012: nos. 527-569, 597-621A, p. 160 (Ekbatana and Mihrdatkirt). Their obverse bears the abbreviation *wl* for *wlgšy* - Walgaš, the name of the king (Gignoux 1972: 66; Keller 2010: 624-630), and the so-called Arsacid symbol —  — which occurred earlier on the coinage of Vardanes (S64.39). From this time the majority of Parthian coins contain the monarch's personal name (see Henning 1958: 40 and the list of legends in Sellwood 1983: Appendix 2, 316-317. Cf. also Alram 1986: nos. 405-428).

The issue classified by D. Sellwood as S72 is dated to the end of the reign of Vologases I and the beginning of Pakoros II's (Wroth 1903: 209-210; McDowell 1935: 74-76; Sellwood 1967: 28, F; Sellwood 1983: 295; Alram 1986: nos. 406-408). It comprises tetradrachms, drachms, and bronzes (chalkoi). The Greek legend on the tetradrachms reads ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΝ ΑΡΣΑΚΟΥ ΟΛΑΓΑΣΟΥ ΔΙΚΑΙΟΥ ΕΠΙΦΑΝΟΥΣ ΦΙΛΕΛΛΗΝΟΣ (Tetradrachms: S72.1-7; Sinisi 2012: nos. 689A-722; 752-770). A noteworthy innovation is the occurrence of the king's personal name ΟΛΑΓΑΣΟΥ instead of the title ΕΥΕΡΓΕΤΟΥ. "Vologases" is the Latinized spelling of the name found in Roman sources. Parthian names were inscribed in a variety of spellings in the Greek legends on the coinage (Chaumont 1989: 574). On Vologases II's coins (2nd century A.D.) the spelling is the same as on S72 issues, i.e. ΟΛΑΓΑΣΟΥ (S79; Alram 1986: no. 415). But during Vologases III's reign, the legends read either ΟΛΑΓΑΣΟΥ or ΟΛΟΓΑΣΟΥ (S84; Alram 1986, no. 417). A similar inconsistency is observed on the coinage bearing the name of Gotarzes II, which is inscribed either as ΓΩΤΑΡΖΟΥ or as ΓΩΤΕΡΖΗΣ (Alram 1986: nos. 403-404; Olbrycht 1997a: 90-91).

On S72 coins there are a diadem and a tall, elaborately decorated tiara with hook-shaped ornaments on the monarch's head. Next to the image of the king is a single Greek letter (Α, Β, Γ, or Δ: Sinisi 2012: 169. On the Vologases I's tiara, see Olbrycht 1997: 32-33). A similar custom is observed on Gotarzes II's S66 issues. These Greek letters are most probably the control marks or symbols of the mint. On the obverse of S72 tet-



Fig. 2. Tetradrachmon of Vologases I. Former Collection of Robert Gonnella (no. 689). Obverse: bust of king, with diadem and tiara, left. Reverse: king on throne, receives diadem (?) from standing goddess. Central part of the obverse erased. Legend [BACIAEΩC] BACIA[EΩN] [APCAKOY] [O]ΛAΓA[ΣOY] ΔΙΚΑΙΟΥ ΕΠΙΦΑΝΟΥ[Σ] [ΦΙΛ]ΕΛΛΗΝΟ[C]. Year [Θ]ΠΤ = 389 SE = A.D. 77/78. Month: probably Daisios/May. Mint Seleukeia on the Tigris. Weight 14,11 g; die-axis 12 h. Sellwood 1980, type 72.2; Sinisi 2012, no. 699A (this coin).



Fig. 3. Tetradrachmon of Vologases I. Former Collection of David Sellwood. Obverse: bust of king, with diadem and tiara decorated with hooks, left, sequential letter B behind head. Reverse: king on throne left, receives diadem (?) from standing goddess. Legend [BACIAEΩC] [B]ACIAEΩ[N] APCA[KOY] OΛAΓAΣ[OY] ΔΙΚΑΙΟΥ ΕΠΙΦΑΝΟ[ΥΣ] [ΦΙΛΕΛΛΗΝΟC]. Year ΘΠΤ = 389 SE = A.D. 77/78. Month off-flan. Mint Seleukeia on the Tigris. Weight 13,87 g; die-axis 12 h. Sellwood 1980, type 72.1-2var; Sinisi 2012, no. 720 (this coin). The New York Sale XXXIV. Courtesy of A H Baldwin & Sons Ltd, [www.baldwin.co.uk](http://www.baldwin.co.uk). Lot number 316, 6 January 2015.

radrachms there is a scene showing the king on the throne receiving a diadem from a goddess. A similar type is known for the reverse of Vologases I's S68 issues and the S69 coinage of the usurper known as *filius Vardanis*.

The S72 drachms depict the king in a diadem and tiara decorated with hook-shaped appliqués (S72.8-10; Alram 1986: no. 407; Sinisi 2012: nos. 782A-803, 821-826, p. 169-170). There is usually a horn on the side panel

of the tiara (Alram 1986: no. 408; S 72.9). The obverse depicts a male seated archer. The legend reads: ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΝ ΑΡΣΑΚΟΥ ΕΥΕΡΓΕΤΟΥ ΔΙΚΑΙΟΥ ΕΠΙΦΑΝΟΥΣ ΦΙΛΕΛΛΗΝΟΣ. The abbreviation *wl* (as on S71) or *wl M* appear on the obverse of drachms. Letter *M* denotes the title *MLK'* - *šāh*, i.e. “king” (Gignoux 1972: 57). The letters *wl M* refer to “king Walgaš”. S72 coinage also includes chalkoi issued in Seleukeia, bearing the date ΗΠΤ = 388 SE = A.D. 76/77 (S72.11) (McDowell 1935: 76, no. 97; Le Rider 1965: 174, no. 380; S72.11; Le Rider 1998: no. 51, inventory no. 668; Olbrycht 1999: 74-75; Sinisi 2012: nos. 622A-628A). The obverse portrays the monarch in a tiara, while the reverse contains an eagle or falcon. In terms of the chronology of S72 tetradrachms’ issues, the earliest are dated from the month of Dystros 389 SE (February 78) to the months of Loios 390 SE (July 79) and the extra, or “Embolimos,” month likewise of 390 SE.<sup>8</sup>

A few essential innovations are observed in the iconography of S72 coins. One of the novelties is the monarch wearing a high tiara, which subsequently became a predominant trend in the coinage of the Arsacids (Olbrycht 1997: 32; 49). Vologases I’s inspiration for the re-introduction of the tiara could have come from the Indo-Parthians, one of whom, Gondophares (ca. 20-50), was depicted with tiaras modelled on the crowns of Sinatrukes and Phraates III (See Olbrycht 2013; 2013b: 125-131. On Gondophares’ coins, see Alram 1986: nos. 1158-1175).

A significant change came with the appearance of Vologases’ personal name in the legend. There had been instances of the use of a monarch’s personal name earlier on Parthian coinage, but they were sporadic (Alram 1986: nos. 394-404; Keller 2010: 624-630), sometimes coming about due to domestic strife involving diverse factions, as had happened under Vonones I and Gotarzes II (Olbrycht 1998: 185; 2013b: 36-40; 192-193). From S72 onward, the monarch’s name (written in Greek) appeared regularly on Parthian tetradrachms. Another innovation was the presence of the

<sup>8</sup> Pestman 1981, 218 states that in Ptolemaic Egypt the Embolimos month of the “Macedonian calendar was inserted at the end of every other year, after the last complete month and before the month during which the next year began (i.e., before the month during which the anniversary of the king’s accession to the throne was celebrated).” In Parthia, however, the Embolimos appears to have been inserted according to the Babylonian pattern within cycles of 19 years and with intercalary months falling at the end of year 1 and in the middle of years 4, 7, 10, 12, 15, 18. The position of this intercalary month within a given year varied during the Arsacid period. See Sinisi 2012, 53, note 195.

Parthian name *wl < wlgšy* (Walgaš/Vologases: the Parthian version of the name had first occurred on S71 issues) alongside the title *M < MLK'* - *šāh*, “king”. Some (but not all) of the details of the king’s portrait on S72 allude to images of Vologases I (see the face features in S72.2, and in Alram 1987: Taf. 11, no. 23; S68.5). However, we must bear in mind that the conditions prevailing in Parthian workshops were not conducive to the maintenance of a standard portrait of the monarch. Vologases I was variously depicted: on some coins he appears with a straight nose, while on others he has a hooked nose (Wroth 1903: Pl. XXIX 5; Petrowicz 1904: Taf. XIX 1; Sellwood 1983: Pl. 7/11).

W. Wroth associated coins minted by a Vologases in 389-390 SE (later classified as S72) with a hypothetical Vologases II, whom he conjectured reigned for nearly 70 years (77/78 - 146/147) (Wroth 1903: 209-210). E.T. Newell seconded Wroth’s hypothesis (Newell 1938: 490-491; Pl. 144 h, L, M.). G. Le Rider also supported this notion, but reduced Vologases II’s alleged reign to about 77/8 - 106/108 (Le Rider 1965: 174-176). To this day, numismatists and historians ascribe S72 issues to a monarch named Vologases II (Sellwood 1967: 19-20; 1980: 232-3; 1983: 295; Alram 1986: nos. 406-408; Schippmann 1989: 576; Assar 2011: 146-147). R. McDowell was nearer the truth with his attribution of the coins minted in 389-390 SE in the name of a Vologases to Vologases I (McDowell 1935: 119-121). Ockham’s razor — the principle of avoiding the multiplication of entities beyond necessity (*Entia non sunt multiplicanda praeter necessitatem*) — may justifiably be applied to many of the hypotheses concerning Vologases II as an alleged rival of Vologases I and Pakoros II. There is no evidence to suggest that a Vologases II ruled Parthia beginning in A.D. 76-77 or 78-79. S72 coins were issued under Vologases I as his latest known coinage. Chronologically (tetradrachms minted in 389-390 SE = A.D. 77/78 - 78/79; chalkoi minted in 388 SE = A.D. 76/77), they were a continuation of S70-S71 issues. Their style and use of the monarch’s personal name link S72 emissions with Vologases I’s earlier issues.

A paucity of records from the last years of Vologases I’s reign has hindered many historians to give a convincing reconstruction of the period. We are informed that in A.D. 75 Vologases I solicited Roman assistance against the Alans (Dio 65.15.3. Cf. Olbrycht 1998: 203). S71 issues, which were undoubtedly minted on Vologases I’s order, ended in A.D. 77/78. Unfortunately, none of the Roman sources makes a direct reference to the



king's death. Vologases' last tetradrachms were minted in Loios 390 SE (July A.D. 79), and in the Embolimos month (Sinisi 2012: type 767A). In view of the S72 issues we may conclude that Vologases I died in the late summer of A.D. 79 at the earliest.

The coins of Pakoros II (S73, 75-77) are easy to identify, as most of them carry the monarch's personal name (Afram 1986: 409-413; Shore 1993: nos. 394-403). Some scholars assume that the successor to Vologases I was the first king with the name Pakoros in Parthia (Assar 2011: 200). The numbering of Arsacid homonymous kings is in some cases subject to controversy. This pertains especially to the rulers named Pakoros. Notwithstanding doubts that have been raised, Pakoros, son of Orodes II (ca. 57-37 B.C.), should be styled as Pakoros I for there is evidence pointing to his royal status.<sup>9</sup> Thus we may justifiably speak of a Pakoros II who succeeded Vologases. Concerning Pakoros II's coinage, an evolution is distinctly visible in the representation of the monarch on his coins: from the visage of a young, beardless prince to that of a mature man sporting a beard. Pakoros II reigned for over thirty years, from about 78 to about 110 (Olbrycht 1998b: 131). On his earliest coins (S73) he is shown as a beardless youth — a rare phenomenon in the Parthian minting tradition (the king - issuer of the S49 coinage, usually identified as Pakoros I, is also portrayed as a young beardless prince). On the reverse of the tetradrachms, the king in profile wears a diadem (S73.1-10). A Greek letter (Α, Β, Γ or Δ) appears beside the king's head. The reverse shows the king receiving the diadem from a standing goddess. The legend (frequently off-flan) contains the monarch's personal name: ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΝ ΑΡΣΑΚΟΥ ΠΑΚΟΡΟΥ ΔΙΚΑΙΟΥ ΕΠΙΦΑΝΟΥΣ ΦΙΛΕΛΛΗΝΟΣ.

S73 also includes drachms (S73.11-14; Sinisi 2012: nos. 570-596A), some of which contain the letters *pk* on the obverse (Afram 1986: no. 410; S73.13), an abbreviation for the name *pkwry*, or Pakōr (Gignoux 1972: 31. Cf. Justi 1895: 238-240). The obverse shows in profile the young beardless ruler. The legend, in many cases illegible, reads: ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΝ

<sup>9</sup> Pakoros I was co-regent with Orodes II (58/7 - 38/7 B.C.) and perhaps even used the title "King of Kings" (Liv. *Ep.* 128 (38 B.C.); Tac. *Hist.* 5.9; Iust. 42.4.10; Front. 1.1.6). Gaslain 2007: 9-20 rightly calls him Pakoros I. Coins of S49 were attributed to Pakoros I by Wroth (1903: 97-98). See also Gaslain 2007. Sellwood and A. Simonetta 2006: 288-292 maintain that S49 coins were struck by Phraates IV. Simonetta 1978 linked S44 coins (in Sellwood 1980 viewed as Orodes II's issues) with Pakoros I, but this was rejected by Mørkholm 1980: 38, n. 19.

ΑΡΣΑΚΟΥ ΕΥΕΡΓΕΤΟΥ ΔΙΚΑΙΟΥ ΕΠΙΦΑΝΟΥΣ ΦΙΛΕΛΛΗΝΟΣ.

The mint marks suggest that they were emitted at Ekbatana (S73.11; Sinisi 2012: nos. 1004-1035A) or Margiana (S73.14). S73 also includes bronzes (S73.15-18. Cf. Sinisi 2012: nos. 629A-632A, 1036-1099).



Fig. 4. Tetradrachmon of Pakoros II. Münzkabinett der Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin. Item no. 18212993. Picture: Münzkabinett der Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin. Aufnahme durch Lutz-Jürgen Lübke. Obverse: bust of king, left, letter B behind head. Reverse: king on throne, receives diadem from goddess. Legend: [ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΝ ΑΡΣΑΚΟΥ Π]ΑΚΟΡ[ΟΥ] ΔΙΚΑΙΟΥ Ε]ΠΙΦ]ΑΝΟΥ [ΦΙΛΕ]ΛΛΗΝ[ΟC]. Year ΘΠΤ = 389 SE = A.D. 77/78. Month ΔΑΙCΙΟΥ (May). Mint Seleukeia on the Tigris. Weight 11,79 g; diameter 27 mm; die-axis 12 h. Sellwood 1980, type 73.3; Sinisi 2012, no. 656 (this coin).

The dates engraved on S72 coins reveal that many are contemporary with Pakoros's first issue, S73, which covers the interval Dystros 389-391 SE (February 78-79, for 391 SE no month is legible: Sinisi 2012: nos. 637A-688, 723A-751A, 771-781), while S72 encompasses years 388-390 SE (from A.D. 76/77 to Loios/July 79). Contrary to what some have argued (see, e.g., McDowell 1935: 229), there is no indication that a conflict of any kind occurred during this period: the mint at Seleukeia was working simultaneously for two rulers. The purpose of the king's personal name on the coins of Vologases I and Pakoros II, respectively, was to distinguish between the father and the son, and did not signify the existence of some sort of rivalry between the two (Olbrycht 1999).

Pakoros II's S76 tetradrachms (S76.1; Alram 1986: 412; Sinisi 2012: 1173A-1178) show a mature king, with a beard of middling length. The obverse carries an image of the king on the throne receiving a diadem (or a ring) from a goddess holding a sceptre. They contain the date of 404 SE = A.D. 92/3. Pakoros II does not wear the tiara, but does sport a long beard on his coinage until his last tetradrachms dated 404-408 SE = A.D. 92-96/7

(Afram 1986: 413; S77.1-7; Wroth 1903: 200, no. 45; Sinisi 2012: nos. 1179-1219A). The tiara is decorated with hook applications, similar to those on Vologases I's S72 coins. Next to Pakoros II's head is a Greek letter, Α, Β, Γ, or Δ. The portrait type on Pakoros II's last tetradrachm issue (S77) clearly alludes to his earlier images and to the portrait of Vologases I on the S72 coinage.

Pakoros II imitated several aspects of S71 and S72 on his own issues. He had his personal name and a tiara depicted on his coinage. This continuity is not surprising, considering the fact that S71 and S72 were his father's issues. Pakoros II's minters continued to use some of the dies that had been used to produce S72 coins, which implies a continuity in time (Sellwood 1983: 296).

By and large, the Parthian coinage of the late A.D. 70s shows that in his old age Vologases I decided to designate his young son Pakoros II as his heir.<sup>10</sup> This move was in perfect harmony with Vologases' policy, which was always far-sighted, especially as regards the avoidance of the chronic family conflicts that had plagued the Arsacid clan (Parthian internal struggles: Olbrycht 1997; 1998: 176-190; 2013; 2013b). Already at the beginning of his reign, he had cut short dynastic quarrels by appointing his brothers to rule separate kingdoms (Olbrycht 1998b: 126). It seems self-evident that at the close of his reign the ever-prudent Vologases I settled the matter of succession by making Pakoros his heir. Perhaps Artabanos III, who may have been another of Vologases' sons, played a part in this decision. If so, he would have ruled northern Mesopotamia. Sinisi (2012: 178) assumes that Artabanos III was the brother of Vologases I and regent on behalf of Pakoros II. The available sources do not mention any of Vologases' brothers except for the well-known figures of Tiridates and Pakoros. Thus it seems more probable that Artabanos III was the son of Vologases I and brother of Pakoros II. Roman records mention one Artabanos, prince of lands along the Euphrates (viz. Mesopotamia), who came out in support of the Roman usurper Pseudo-Nero. Cassius Dio<sup>11</sup> and

<sup>10</sup> This was assumed, although not corroborated, by Schur 1949: 2020-21: "Es würde meines Erachtens der Art des Vologases mehr entsprechen, daß er durch die Königswahl und Krönung des Nachfolgers schon bei seinen Lebzeiten für einen ungestörten Übergang der Herrschaft zu sorgen gesucht hätte".

<sup>11</sup> Dio 66.19.3b-c (= Zonaras 11.18 p. 55D): ἐπὶ τούτου καὶ ὁ Ψευδονέρων ἐφάνη, ὃς Ἀσιανὸς ἦν, ἐκαλεῖτο δὲ Τερέντιος Μάξιμος, προσεικῶς δὲ τῷ Νέρωνι καὶ τὸ εἶδος καὶ τὴν φωνήν (καὶ γὰρ καὶ ἐκίθαρχε). ἔκ τε τῆς Ἀσίας τινὰς

Joannes Antiochenos<sup>12</sup> furnish the pretender's true name as Terentius Maximus, active in the reign of the Emperor Titus (ruled 24 June 79 - 13 September 81). Cassius Dio does not accord Artabanos the title of *basi-leus*, i.e. "king": instead he calls him *archegos* (ἀρχηγός), i.e. a "ruler" — a meaningful difference: Artabanos was not the "King of Kings" but a governor or prince with a status that was not fully clear to the Romans. Dio adds that "Artabanos supported Terentius because of his anger against Titus." This is a crucial statement, because it allows us to understand Artabanos' position. In late A.D. 70, the king of Parthia, Vologases I, sent a deputation to Titus, son of Vespasian, at Zeugma on the Euphrates expressing his congratulations on the Roman victory over the Jews (On the Parthian-Roman diplomatic contacts in A.D. 68-70, see Jones 1985). Vologases offered Titus a gold crown. Titus accepted this gift and provided a banquet for the Parthian messengers (Ios. *BJ* 7.105-106). It is probable that Artabanos, conceivably a son of Vologases I, was the Parthian chief envoy. During the ceremonial banquet there must have been some differences between Titus and Artabanos. Artabanos' support for a False-Nero may have been a result of serious tensions between Parthia and Rome in the 70s.<sup>13</sup> Alternatively, Artabanos' anger may have resulted from the refusal of Titus to support his claim to the Parthian throne (Gallivan 1973: 364-365). I find the former possibility to have greater attractions, but there can be no certainty due to meager evidence.

Artabanos III is known from S74 coinage with his personal name engraved on issues minted from Gorpaios 391 SE (= August A.D. 80) to Audynaio 393 SE (December A.D. 81).<sup>14</sup> The first coins of Pakoros II dated in 393 SE appeared in Hyperberetaios, i.e. September A.D. 82

προσεποιήσατο καὶ ἐπὶ τὸν Εὐφράτην προχωρῶν πολλῶ πλείους ἀνηρτήσατο, καὶ τέλος πρὸς Ἀρτάβανον τὸν τῶν Πάρθων κατέφυγεν ἀρχηγόν, ὃς καὶ δι' ὀργῆς τὸν Τίτον ποιούμενος καὶ ἐδέξατο τοῦτον καὶ καταγαγεῖν εἰς Ῥώμην παρεσκευάζετο.

<sup>12</sup> Ioan. Ant. *FHG* IV Frg. 104: Ὅτι ἐπὶ Τίτου τοῦ Ῥωμαίων βασιλέως, ἀνὴρ τις [Ἀσιανὸς] ὦν [ἦν?] τὸ γένος, Τερέντιος Μάξιμος ὄνομα, τὰ τε ἄλλα καὶ τὴν φωνὴν προσεικὼς τῷ Νέρωνι.

<sup>13</sup> In the 70s, the mutual relations between Vologases and his house and Rome under Vespasian remained rather chilly: there were some diplomatic and military tensions between Parthia and Rome concerning Kommagene, Iberia, Albania and the Parthian fightings against the Alans. For details, see Debevoise 1938: 198-202; Tuplin 1989: 372-377; Olbrycht 1998b: 133-134.

<sup>14</sup> See Sinisi 2012: nos. 836-865A. Sellwood 1980 did not know that Artabanos III's coins dated to 393 SE. The multiplication of Parthian kings named Artabanos, proposed by Assar (2011: 115, 119, 147-148) remains unconvincing and should be treated with caution.

(S75.1; Sinisi 2012: no. 1100A). This implies that Artabanos III was eliminated from the political stage of Parthia at some point between January and August of 82: no details are known but on the evidence of some coin series (see below) one may suppose that he was forced to surrender and was deposed by Pakoros. He issued tetradrachms at Seleukeia on the Tigris and had mints in Media (Ekbatana and Rhagai; Sinisi 2012: 873A-1003). Although D. Sellwood attributes some drachms and bronzes to this prince (S74.6-12), he nevertheless emphasizes that they are hard to distinguish from other issues, particularly S63, 65, and 66 of Artabanos II and Gotarzes II (Sellwood 1980: 241).



Fig. 5. Tetradrachmon of Artabanos III. Münzkabinett der Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin. Item no. 18202786. Picture: Münzkabinett der Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin. Aufnahme durch Lutz-Jürgen Lübke. Obverse: bust of king, left. Reverse: king on throne, receives (untied?) diadem from goddess. Legend: [BA]CI[AEΩC] BACIAEΩ[N] [APCAKOY] APTABA[NOY] ΔΙΚΑΙΟΥ ΕΠΙΦΑΝΟ[YC] [ΦΙΛ]ΕΛΛΗΝ[OC]. Year ΒΘΤ = 392 SE = A.D. 80/81. Month name off-flan. Mint Seleukeia on the Tigris. Weight 13,33 g; diameter 27 mm; die-axis 12 h. Sellwood 1980, type 74.2-5 varia (month illegible); Sinisi 2012, no. 852 (this coin).

The fact that Artabanos III endeavoured to attain the crown of Parthia implies that he was an Arsacid. No other candidate except a member of the Arsacid clan could have stood a chance of ascending to the throne. The ancient sources uniformly speak of the law that was recognized throughout Iran that only someone of Arsacid blood was eligible to rule. The Iranians' adherence to the Arsacid dynasty was an extremely strong and an enduring factor in the Parthian empire (Strab. 16.1.28; Amm. 23.6.6. See Olbrycht 2013b: 13-14).

Judging by the coins, which show a bearded man, Artabanos III was older than Pakoros II. His career was short-lived but he became a powerful ruler endangering Pakoros' royal aspirations. Pakoros' final victory was

significant enough to find reflection on the tetradrachms that Pakoros II issued in A.D. 82-85 (S75). The first of these are dated 393 SE in the month of Hyperberetaios, viz. September A.D. 82. The image on these tetradrachms (Alram 1986: no. 411; S75.1-6; Sinisi 2012: nos. 1100A-1016A) shows a young king with a short beard. The layout (with the head in profile and the torso en face) is reminiscent of Vologases I's S68 coins. On the reverse, there is a rare scene with historical connotations: the king mounted on horseback receives a diadem from a standing goddess with a long sceptre. Behind the goddess is another male figure holding a ribbon (probably an unravelled diadem). The scene appears to be a commemoration of Pakoros II's victory over his rival Artabanos III.

Artabanos III had begun his career as the governor of northern Mesopotamia and perhaps the adjacent regions. He could exercise some sort of control of the dependent kingdoms of Osroene, Adiabene and Gordyene under Vologases I. We cannot rule out that his first monetary issues were minted under an agreement with Pakoros II on the basis of the division of the Parthian Empire, and perhaps even in accordance with the will of Vologases I. Soon afterward, Artabanos challenged his brother Pakoros II for the throne and was quickly defeated.

A form of synarchy, in which there was the joint rule of a father and son, was sometimes practised in Parthia. Perhaps the prototype for this institution came from the Achaemenids and/or the Seleucids (Calmeyer 1976: 68-95). Moreover, we know that the Sasanian Shapur I was crowned during the lifetime of his father, Ardashir I (Calmeyer 1976: 64-65). There are several instances of co-regency on record for Parthia. Orodes II appointed Pakoros I his co-regent (Karras-Klapproth 1988: 107-108; Gaslain 2007), Phraates III was most probably his father Sinatrukes' co-regent (Mørkholm 1980: 43-44; Nikitin 1998: 17, n. 8), and Mithradates III was co-regent to Phraates III. Both co-regents struck their own coinage (Mørkholm 1980: 45; Nikitin 1995: 227-229). Phraates IV probably made Phraatakes his co-regent (Karras-Klapproth 1988: 146-147). Vologases I continued the tradition, appointing his son Pakoros II a *rex iunior* and joint ruler (see also Schottky 1991: 130).

The hypothesis that Pakoros II succeeded Vologases I is unexpectedly confirmed in the *Thebaid* by the Roman poet Publius Papinius Statius (ca. 40-96). Statius wrote the *Thebaid* over the course of a dozen years (*o mihi bis senos multum vigilata per annos Thebai*), ca. 79/80 - ca. 90/91 (See the last verse of the poem: *Theb.* 12.811-12. Cf. Vessey 1973: 55).



The poem tells the story how after the death of the bard Amphiaras young Thiodamas is chosen as his successor (*Theb.* 8.275-285). But the young appointee finds it difficult to assume his new office. Thereupon Statius undertakes an elaborate comparison of Thiodamas' situation with the "Achaemenid boy" (*puer Achaemenius*: cf. Vessey 1973: 266, n. 2):

*Sicut Achaemenius solium gentesque paternas (286)  
 exceptit si forte puer, cui uiuere patrem  
 tutius, incerta formidine gaudia librat  
 an fidi procures, ne pugnet uulgus habenis,  
 cui latus Euphratae, cui Caspia limina mandet;  
 sumere tunc arcus ipsumque onerare ueretur  
 patris equum uisusque sibi nec sceptrum capaci  
 sustentare manu nec adhuc implere tiaran.*<sup>15</sup>

*Overwhelmed by the high honour and confounded by the unlooked-for glory he humbly reverences the proffered leaves, and pleads that he is unequal to the task, and must needs for his merit be constrained: even as when perchance a young Achaemenian prince has succeeded to the throne and all his father's realms (though safer were it for him that his sire still lived), his delight he balances with uncertain fear, whether his nobles be loyal, whether the folk will fight against his governance, to whom he shall entrust the frontier of Euphrates or the Caspian gate; then does he feel awe to wield the bow and to mount his father's own steed; in his own judgement his hand is not broad enough to hold up the sceptre, nor yet can he fill out the tiara.*<sup>16</sup>

Statius uses the proper adjective "Achaemenius" and its derivative "Achaemeniae" (cf. *Theb.* 1.718: *gentis Achaemeniae ritu*), as a reference to the Parthians, the contemporary lords of Iran, and not to the Achaemenids of the Battle of Salamis or Kunaxa.<sup>17</sup> His terminology is archaic, but the reality referred to is current. He names the Euphrates as the frontier

<sup>15</sup> *Theb.* 8.286-293. Edition: Lesneur 1991: 118.

<sup>16</sup> Translation based on the Loeb edition and Hollis 1994, 205, with my own corrections.

<sup>17</sup> Both terms appear in Roman poetry, cf. *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae*, Bd. I, Lipsiae 1900: s.v. *Achaemenius*, 382. Statius uses the notion *Persae* and its variants sporadically (*Silvae* 3.62; 5.187).

river, separating the Occident from the Orient. In Statius' era indeed the Euphrates marked the border between Rome and Parthia, whereas in the Achaemenid period it did not. He lists the attributes of Achaemenius' royal authority: the bow, the sceptre, and the tiara — the principal Arsacid insignia. In addition, he mentions the horse (cf. *Silvae* 2.19: *Parthus equum*), an animal associated with the Parthians in the literary sources (Olbrycht 2003: 89-90). The tiara is an intriguing detail, which reappeared on Parthian tetradrachms precisely when Statius began composing the *Thebaid* (A.D. 78-79). The key position of the great clans, referred to as the *proceres*, was characteristic of the Parthian political system (Olbrycht 2003: 82-83; 2013b, *passim*). The young ruler is not sure to whom to entrust the provinces on the Euphrates and the lands around the Caspian, which is also an exact reflection of the contemporary situation in Parthia. Quite possibly the anticipation of the conflict with Artabanos III, who controlled the lands on the Euphrates, is lurking behind the young Achaemenian's uncertainty. Statius compares the situation of the successor to a great monarch like Vologases I with young Thiodamas' predicament. The prince succeeding to the Oriental throne is the son of his great predecessor, i.e. the son of Vologases. The situation corresponds to the opening years of the reign of Pakoros II. A.S. Hollis is absolutely right: "So unusual and so detailed is the picture drawn here that one naturally wonders whether Statius had in mind a real situation from recent Parthian history" (Hollis 1994: 205-206). Curiously, Statius never mentions Vologases and Pakoros II by name. However, Pakoros II appears in the Roman poetry of Domitian's reign as a powerful monarch of the Orient: Martial 9.35.3 writes of him: *scis quid in Arsacia Pacorus deliberet aula* ("you know what Pakoros is pondering in his dynastic palace of Arsacia"). The last dated issues of Pakoros II's tetradrachms (S77) were minted when Martial was composing this epigram in c. A.D. 96.

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## Abbreviations

- SE = Seleucid era.  
S = Sellwood 1980.

## **PARTHIAN AND SASANIAN SETTLEMENT PATTERNS ON THE DEH LURAN PLAIN, KHUZISTAN PROVINCE, SOUTHWESTERN IRAN**

BY

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**Abstract:** A stratified pedestrian survey provides the data for this interim report on the Partho-Sasanian occupations of the Deh Luran Plain. Settlement and site patterning observed in relation to water and soil management systems are described and compared with other regions, primarily the Diyala and Upper Khuzistan (Susiana) Plains. The roles of marginality, autonomy, and cooperating corporate groups are considered in relation to the findings of the survey.

**Keywords:** Southwestern Iran, Parthian, Sasanian, Settlement Patterns, Agricultural Strategies, Water Management, Corporate Groups

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this paper is threefold: (1) to present an interim report on the Partho-Sasanian occupations of the Deh Luran Plain, (2) to compare the settlement patterns of the Deh Luran Plain for the Parthian and Sasanian periods with those of a few other key regions of the Middle East, and (3) to discuss the possible role(s) of the Deh Luran Plain in relation to the larger economic and socio-political centers in the greater Mesopotamian sphere during these periods.

The settlement pattern data presented in this paper were derived as part of a long-term comprehensive archaeological program conducted on the Deh Luran Plain of southwestern Iran, but curtailed since the Iranian Revolution of 1979. Sponsored by Rice University and funded by the National Science Foundation, this program was under the general direction of Dr. Frank Hole. The majority of the data were collected during a 1968-69 reconnaissance of the plain (Neely 1969, 1970, 1974; Neely & Wright 1994; Wright & Neely 2010), although some information comes from the 1963-64 fieldwork as well (Hole, Flannery & Neely 1969).



This paper is preliminary to a third monograph on the settlement history of the Deh Luran Plain. The first two volumes described settlements from the Neolithic through the Achaemenid periods and the final volume will deal with the Seleucid through the Medieval Islamic periods. While the data we present on sites and canals are well established, we anticipate some further refinement of the ceramic chronology that will allow more precise dating of the sites within the 900 years span considered here.

### **Environmental setting**

Since the fieldwork was completed the Deh Luran Plain has been transformed through intensive irrigation so some of the following remarks are out of date, but are pertinent to the pre-modern conditions. The details concerning the microenvironments (Coe & Flannery 1964) and general environment of the Deh Luran Plain have been published in several venues (Hole 1987; Hole, Flannery & Neely 1969; Kirkby 1977; Kirkby & Kirkby 1969; Neely 1974; Neely & Wright 1994; Wright & Neely 2010). Only the most salient characteristics pertaining to the economy and this settlement pattern study will be reviewed.

The Deh Luran Plain (Pl. 1) is located in southwestern Iran near the border with Iraq, some 300 kilometers north of the Persian Gulf and 550 kilometers southwest of Tehran. Note that this is about 200 kilometers southeast of the Diyala region of Iraq and 125 kilometers northwest of the Upper Khuzistan (Susiana) Plain of Iran, areas to be referred to in this paper in relation to the findings of the intensive archaeological surveys conducted by Adams (1962, 1965) and Wenke (1975, 1987).

The Deh Luran Plain lies within the semi-arid Assyrian Steppe (Hatt 1959) biotic province at an elevation of about 150 to 300 meters above sea level. The summer months are dry and hot, with high mean temperatures of over 50° Celsius quite common. Winter temperatures seldom fall below freezing. The annual precipitation of 250 to 350 millimeters is highly variable and not equally distributed throughout the year. In the winter, when the vast majority of the precipitation occurs, the alluvial plain is transformed in places into meadows of various grasses and wild flowers.

There are four major microenvironmental/environmental zones on the plain, which were exploited in different ways. These zones (Pl. 2), the rocky piedmont, the riverine, the alluvial plain, and the shallow, salty marsh are based on the situation in 1969 (Hole, Flannery & Neely 1969; Kirkby 1977; Kirkby & Kirkby 1969).

- 1) The *rocky piedmont* (Pl. 3) forms the northern portion of the survey area, north of the improved road passing southeast-to-northwest through the Deh Luran Plain from the city of Dezful. The piedmont rises in a fairly steep slope to the foothills of the Kuh-i-Siah Range of the Zagros Mountains. This microenvironment is rocky and highly dissected by erosional channels. A number of small springs, as well as tar and naphtha seeps, effloresce at and near the juncture of the piedmont with the foothills of the Kuh-i-Siah. Compared with the alluvial plain, the piedmont is characterized by a substantial increase of perennial grasses as well as small trees and shrubs.
- 2) The *riverine microenvironment* (Pl. 4) consists of the channels of the Mehme and Dawairij Rivers and their flood plains. The rivers, especially the Mehme, carry brackish waters charged with gypsum and other salts from geological strata cut by their channels in the foothills and mountains north of Deh Luran. Upstream, beyond the plain, the river channels are deep and narrow and are characterized by nearly vertical banks with heavy rock content. As they enter the plain from the north, the channels are over ten meters below the alluvium, but become shallower to the south. The terraced flood plains, lying between the main river channel and the alluvial plain, are most extensive to the south. There, the terraces are vegetated densely with grasses and low forests of Tamarisk (*Tamarix*), wild Licorice (*Glycyrrhiza*), and Poplar (*Populus*).
- 3) The *alluvial plain* (Pls. 5-7) forms the largest of the four microenvironments. It is essentially a flat alluvial surface with small amounts of scattered, low vegetation. Natural topographic features consist of depressions or "sink holes", the erosional cuts of the two main perennial river systems, a few smaller spring-fed watercourses, and numerous small intermittent drainages. Manmade features consist of canals and qanat systems, and nearly all forms rising above the level of the plain's surface.
- 4) The *shallow, salty marsh* (Pl. 8) extends as an arc-shaped zone divided into two segments. Lying predominantly in the west-central portion of the plain, the marsh area extends southeast until it takes a more easterly trend. The second, smaller segment, which forms the easternmost extreme of the arc-shaped zone, lies east of the Dawairij River and spans at least 15 kilometers. The zone ranges from about one to three kilometers in width and is over 35 kilometers in total length. Characterized by saline soils and sparse low vegetation of highly salt-resistant

shrubs, the zone is dissected by numerous small erosional cuts. While marshy during the winter rainy season, this microenvironment is essentially dry and salt-encrusted during the summer. In pre-Islamic times this area apparently served, as it does today to a limited extent, as a drainage area for excess irrigation waters.

In summary, it is important to emphasize three environmental characteristics that affected the economy and settlement patterns: (1) the extreme aridity of the area, (2) the microenvironmental zones of the plain, and (3) the presence of springs and the two rivers available to supply waters for domestic and irrigation purposes.

### **Survey results**

A total of 330 sites were recorded during the archaeological survey of the Deh Luran Plain (fig. 9). While the entire area of the nearly 1000 square kilometer plain was not surveyed, the use of a “zone” and “band” stratified sampling technique resulted in survey coverage of approximately 70 percent of the plain and the discovery of an estimated 80 percent of the visible sites and features in each of the microenvironmental zones defined (Neely 1969: 9-11; Neely & Wright 1994: 9).

Fortunately, the smaller sites and features of the Parthian, Sasanian, and Islamic periods were conspicuous on the ground surface. Not only could they be located with relative ease, but also with a minimum of troweling it was often possible to determine and accurately map the various components of the sites and even the internal features of many of the houses (Pls. 10-15). The information pertaining to the smaller occupations, which are often not visible or overlooked, may be considered a major contribution of this survey. This ease of location and mapping was probably the result of a number of factors: the relatively recent date of these features, the nature and location of their construction, and the fact that the plain has undergone a relatively long period in which little alluviation has taken place (Kirkby 1977; Kirkby & Kirkby 1969: 2-3).

### **Overview Data**

Of the 330 sites recorded for all periods, 263 were habitation sites of which 123 (47%) were found to have ceramics dating to late occupational

components representing periods from the Parthian into Medieval Islamic times (ca. 210 B.C.E. to Post-10th Century C.E. – see Table 1). Of the 123 sites, 31 (25%) sites had Parthian ceramics, 112 sites (91%) had ceramics dating to the Sasanian and 7<sup>th</sup> Century Islamic periods, 68 sites (55%) contained ceramics belonging to the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> Century Islamic period, 27 sites (22%) were characterized by 10<sup>th</sup> Century Islamic ceramics, and only 8 sites (0.07%) were found to have Post-10th Century Islamic ceramics.

In addition, of the 123 sites, 77 sites (63%) had two or more periods of occupation, and 113 (92%) had pottery dating to the Parthian and/or Sasanian periods. Of the 113 sites, only one site (0.009%) had only Parthian pottery, 30 sites had both Parthian and Sasanian ceramics, 42 sites (37%) had only Sasanian pottery, and 60 sites (53%) had Sasanian and later pottery. Of the 113 sites, 7 (0.06%) were Parthian reoccupations of immediately preceding occupations while only one (0.009%) represented a Parthian reoccupation of a long abandoned site. Of the 31 sites with a Parthian occupation, 30 (97%) had a Sasanian occupation. Of the 112 sites with a Sasanian occupation and 7<sup>th</sup> Century Islamic occupation, 60 (54%) have an immediately following 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> Century Islamic occupation.

Of the 113 Parthian and Sasanian sites, only three (0.03%) were found with only glazed pottery, 35 sites (31%) had both glazed and unglazed (i.e., plain and surface manipulated) pottery, and 71 sites (63%) were found to have only unglazed (i.e., plain and surface manipulated) pottery. There was a great variance in the number and density of pottery found on these late sites, ranging from none to many hundreds of sherds. In general, as one would suspect, the number and density of pottery fragments increased as the site size increased. It was also noted that the numbers and density of sherds tended to be greater on the later sites.

Table 1 presents a listing of the dated late sites on the Deh Luran Plain. Those sites listed with diagnostic glazed pottery have at present the more precisely dated components (Hill 2006). As will be noted in Table 1, the Optically Stimulated Luminescence dating of a small number of ceramic samples (Hill 2006) and the discovery of a limited number of coins have augmented and made more precise the dating of a few sites.

Unfortunately, the glazed ceramics from only 51 (50%) of the 101 sites with glazed ceramics could be classified precisely enough to determine the period or periods of occupation. This low level of success was due primarily to the presence of only blue/green-glazed pottery at 50 sites that could not be assigned to a time period more specific than “Parthian/Sasanian/

Islamic.” The fact that we could identify diagnostic ceramics from 51 sites was, in fact, somewhat of a surprise considering the rural nature of the Deh Luran Plain and the small size of most of the sites. Our inability to date the 50 sites was also affected by the lack of sherds present at some sites and the small size of some sherds. Of the 51 sites having diagnostic glazed ceramics, 19 (37%) were multi-component sites containing glazed ceramics diagnostic of from two to all five of the late periods (i.e., Parthian and later) identified in Hill’s (2006) ceramic analysis.

### **The Parthian Period (ca. 210 B.C.E. to 225 C.E.)**

The Parthian period is represented by at least 31 sites. Seven (23%) of these sites, one in the northwest quadrant of the plain, one in the southwest, and five in the southeast, were continually occupied or reoccupied sites that had been founded in earlier periods. Ten of the Parthian sites had only glazed ceramics, eight had only unglazed ceramics, while 13 had both glazed and unglazed sherds on their surfaces.

***Settlement and Site Patterns.*** The settlement pattern appears to reflect the changes noted by Wenke (1981: 313, 1987: 255) for the same period on the Susiana Plain and by Adams (1965: 73) for the Diyala region of Iraq. This change was from large mounded sites (*tells* or *tepes*) that were frequently walled, to growing numbers of unwalled sites composed of many small buildings, often occurring as single structures, and often laid out apparently without regard to any overall plan. This type of site increased in number during the Sasanian period.

During this period there are two main clusters of sites as well as a few scattered sites on the plain (Pl. 16). The main clusters, in the northwestern and southeastern portions of the plain, are linear in nature due to the sites being located along canals coming from the Mehmeh and Dawairij Rivers. This pattern had been established in these areas long before the Parthian Period. Neely & Wright (1994) documented these linear arrangements of sites, and contemporary associated canals, on the Deh Luran Plain dating as early as the Chogha Mami Transitional phase (ca. 5,400 to 5,200 B.C.E.).

The six sites not falling into the two main clusters are loosely aligned from north to south down the center of the plain. Sites DL-2 and DL-172, at the northern extreme of the piedmont, were located on natural drainages, and probably drew water from mountain runoff and springs. Three other

sites were located along a drainage/canal carrying waters from the Ab-i Garm spring (Neely & Wright 1994). The sixth site, DL-32 (Cohen 1981; Wright 1981), is a reoccupied site that probably received water from the Mehmeleh River. Site DL-2, was evidently founded during this period and apparently becomes the largest late occupation on the plain, although it may not have attained that status until the Sasanian period.

During the Parthian period, there is a striking paucity of sites in the piedmont zone and central portions of the alluvial plain, suggesting a heavy dependence on canal irrigation from the rivers and a lack of focus on dry-farming. The few Parthian sites recorded on the piedmont may have been camps of pastoralists. The likelihood of transhumant pastoralists occupying the piedmont zone during this and subsequent periods is discussed below.

Measurable site areas for occupations of only one period were usually determinable. However, the site area for each period of occupation on multicomponent sites was difficult and resulted in only rough estimates. Therefore, the following data for all periods should be seen as approximations. During the Parthian period the site areas ranged from 0.02 hectares to about 50 hectares, with a mean of ca. 7.0 hectares. Dwelling areas ranged from 0.008 hectares to 18 hectares, with a mean of ca. 2.1 hectares. Small sites were in the majority, and often were comprised of one well-defined structure (e.g., Pl. 12). However, several of the larger sites were also found with well-defined component structures (e.g., Pl. 13).

In the Parthian period, the number of sites increases from the previous periods, and the majority of the sites are smaller than in previous periods. This is the first period in which we find evidence of small alluvial plain irrigation farming homesteads (described below) with a well-defined structure and courtyard/compound arrangement (Pl. 12). This is also the first period in which evidence of piedmont dry-farming complexes (described below), also with a well-defined structure and courtyard/compound arrangement (Pl. 17), are found.

***Water Management and Irrigation Systems.*** The dating of Parthian and Sasanian canals has only been tentatively accomplished through association with adjacent sites. Most of the canals assigned to these periods were either in continuous use or were refurbishments of canals evidently dating to earlier times. Thus, the dimensions (i.e., length, width, depth) of the canals at any specific point in time were extremely difficult, if not impossible, to determine. As a result, the dimensions we present herein are



well-considered estimates that must await excavations for verification. As in earlier times, sites were in close proximity to canals, presumably to obtain water for domestic needs. In association with the late period sites, the 1969 survey found each of the three canal systems (the Mehmeh, the Ab-i Garm, and the Dawairij) to be over 25 kilometers in length. The primary canals were large, ranging from approximately five meters to twenty meters in width, with an average width of about ten meters.

The several qanat systems present and evidently associated with Parthian sites may have been introduced to the plain to augment already existing canals supplying domestic and irrigation waters perhaps as early as 2,350 B.C.E. This possible early use of qanat technology is based on the apparent association of a qanat/canal system with a large Early Dynastic I-III phase site (DL-34; Pl. 9) and surrounding fields that would have lacked a water supply if the qanat/canal system had not been present (Neely & Wright 1994: 190).

An interesting water management technique was noted at site DL-2 (Pl. 9). There, the community was designed to enhance domestic water resources by harvesting rainfall runoff from architectural features into below ground cisterns (cf. Neely 2015; Scarborough 2009).

### **The Sasanian and 7<sup>th</sup> Century Islamic Periods (225 to ca. 700 C.E.)**

Because of the difficulty in distinguishing Sasanian ceramics from the 7<sup>th</sup> Century Islamic ceramics, I have, for the time being, combined these two periods. The largest number (112) of sites recorded by this survey has occupations dating to this period. Two (0.02%) sites from this period are represented by only glazed ceramics, 92 (82%) sites had only unglazed ceramics, and 18 (16%) sites had both glazed and unglazed ceramics. Seventeen (15%) of the 112 sites were reoccupations of earlier sites that had not been occupied during the Parthian period, while 30 (27%) of the sites were reoccupations of Parthian sites. The west and east clusters each had five reoccupied sites, while the center cluster had seven (Pl. 18).

***Settlement and Site Patterns.*** On the alluvium, the Sasanian and 7<sup>th</sup> Century Islamic settlement pattern was not radically different from that of the preceding period (compare Pls. 16 and 18). However, the number of sites had increased, with the northwest portion having the densest grouping. At the same time, the settlement pattern and site density on the

piedmont changed dramatically. A comparison of Pl. 16 with Pl. 18 illustrates the increase of dated sites, but an examination of Pls. 9 and 19 gives a better idea of the true site density as most of the piedmont sites lack diagnostic pottery and remain attributable only to Parthian/Sasanian/Islamic times. The majority of the piedmont sites were dry-farming complexes.

The sites were more numerous and more dispersed across the landscape than in previous periods. Sites also varied greatly in size from small one-family farmhouses (e.g., DL-10 – Pls. 10 & 11), some of which were less than 100 square meters in floor area, to a center (DL-2) of about 112 hectares. For this period, site areas range from 0.005 hectares to about 112 hectares, with a mean of 8.8 hectares. Dwelling areas range from 0.003 hectares to 5.0 hectares, with a mean of 0.69 hectares. The mean site area of about 8.8 hectares is 1.8 hectares larger than the mean area of the Parthian period sites, and that, in addition to the increase in the total number of sites (from 31 to 112), a nearly fourfold increase, suggests an increase in population. However, this figure may be deceiving, as we do not know if all of the structures were occupied contemporaneously.

When compared with other studies of sites dating to the Parthian and Sasanian periods (e.g., Adams 1965; Wenke 1975, 1987), the majority of the Deh Luran Parthian and Sasanian sites were small. Wenke (1987: 261) reports that there are few settlements in any period on the Susiana Plain that are less than one-half hectare in area, but the Deh Luran Plain has many sites with areas smaller than one-half hectare. It has not been determined if the presence of these small sites is unusual, or if their discovery was due to the near absence of alluviation on the plain for the last several hundred years, the relatively undisturbed condition of the plain at the time of the 1969 survey, or the use of a different survey strategy. It may well be a result of all three.

Most of the sites on the Deh Luran alluvial plain conform to the description provided by Adams (1965: 73) for sites in the Diyala region: "...low and sprawling, with irregular shapes and indefinite contours. ...occupational remains extend in thin bands for considerable distances along old canal levees or crop up sparsely at intervals separated by apparently uninhabited areas." Because of indefinite site boundaries and the close proximity of sites one to another, it is entirely possible that some features recorded in 1969 as multiple sites were originally part of a single larger site. Large structures consisted of platforms and low mounds of earth constructed of

unfired and fired brick. Small structures are usually represented by foundations of cobbles, boulders, and occasionally stone slabs, that today lie partially buried in the alluvium of the plain and the clay eroded from the upper walls. Based on a few preserved upper wall fragments, and ethnographic building techniques seen in Deh Luran, the upper walls of most structures and compounds were evidently constructed of bricks of straw-tempered, unfired clay. The upper walls of some less well made structures and compounds may also have been constructed with straw-tempered, unfired “turtlebacks” (i.e., irregular large globs of clay with nearly parallel longitudinal sides shaped by scraping, a convex upper surface, and a concave lower surface).

It is during this period that small irrigation agriculture farming complexes, such as those illustrated at DL-274 and DL-275 (Pl. 20) near the southwestern margins of the plain, may be distinguished. The fields and canals illustrated in fig. 20 are believed to be associated with the sites due to the presence of contemporaneous diagnostic ceramics on their surfaces.

With the exception of courtyard/compound sites (see below), the only walled communities recorded by our Deh Luran survey appear to have been constructed before or after the Partho-Sasanian occupations. DL-2, evidently the largest site (ca. 112 ha) on the Deh Luran Plain during the Sasanian period, has no evidence of being a walled community, and was sited in a broad canyon not suitable for defense. While this Deh Luran pattern evidently parallels both Adams’ (1965: 73) Diayla findings and Wenke’s (1981: 313, 1987: 255) Susiana observations, this situation contrasts with other areas of Sasanian occupation. For example, on the Mughan Steppe in northwestern Iran and southern Azerbaijan (Alizadeh & Ur 2007; Ur & Alizadeh 2014) and the Gorgan Plain (Kiani 1982), many of the sites, both large and small, have been found with fortification walls.

An important contribution of the Deh Luran survey was the recording of the small Partho-Sasanian courtyard/compound homesteads (figs. 12, 17) especially characterizing the western and central portions of the piedmont and the western alluvial plain areas. The majority of these courtyard/compound units were located in previously occupied portions of the Deh Luran Plain, but most were constructed on previously unoccupied land. These compounds may represent the single or extended family versions of the larger earlier and later multi-family walled sites that have been found on the plain. A question that arises is whether these compounds were unique to Deh Luran, or if they were present elsewhere and have not been

recognized or recorded? St John Simpson called my attention to the work of Elisabetta Valtz (1985) at Tell Mahmud, in the Hamrin Dam Project area of east-central Iraq and about 275 kilometers northwest of Deh Luran. Valtz briefly reports the excavation of a complete structure at Tell Mahmud that is quite similar to some of the Deh Luran structures with compound walls. Although the Tell Mahmud example is about twice the size of its Deh Luran counterparts, the date of the structure, the location and nature of the exposed complex of rooms within the compound, and the geographic orientation of the structure and compound are quite similar. The economic and socio-political relationships between the occupants of these widely separated areas with similar structures deserve further study. Ethnographic studies of both sedentary agriculturalists and transhumant pastoralists (e.g., Digard 1981: fig. 132; Mortensen 1993: figs. 6.50, 6.51; Watson 1979: figs. 5.6, 5.9) attest to the temporal persistence of this courtyard/ compound format of construction.

It has been noted (Hole 1978, 1979, 1987; Hole, Flannery & Neely 1969: 349-350) that the transhumant round practiced today by the Luri pastoralists between the Khorrambad Valley and Deh Luran Plain extends back in time perhaps as early as 4,800 B.C.E. It seems possible that pre-Partho-Sasanian pastoral encampments on the Deh Luran piedmont and alluvium may have been tent sites like Hole (1974, 1987: 83) found at Tepe Tula'i. Considering the long history of transhumance in this region, we should consider that a transhumant pastoral group or groups, living on the Deh Luran Plain primarily during the winter, occupied at least some of the piedmont and alluvium homesteads. Hole (1987: 36) has noted that the mapped Mehme phase (4800-4600 B.C.E.) alluvial plain houses at Tepe Ashrafabad (Neely and Wright 1994: 88-94) have a general plan layout that: "... resembles that of a tent rather than a mud-walled house ...", and perhaps indicates, as is found today, that some of the transhumant pastoralists spent seasonal residence in settled villages. Mortensen (1993) illustrates structures attributed to the Lurs in the Hulailan Valley, about 100 kilometers north of Deh Luran, quite similar in plan view to those illustrated in figs. 12 & 17. The compounds representing the majority of the structures forming the village of Deh Luran during our fieldwork bore a close resemblance to those illustrated in Pls. 12 & 17, but were larger in size and area. Mortensen (1993: figs. 6.50, 6.51) illustrates similar closely situated compounds forming the village of Kahreh in the Hulailan Valley. The distinct possibility that pastoralist inhabited piedmont and alluvial

sites, immediately brings to mind the related, and very important, question of how much the subsistence and economy of the plain's inhabitants depended on domestic animals?

***Water Management and Irrigation Systems.*** Modifications in the water management technology were evidently correlated with variations in the settlement pattern and the apparent population increase. These modifications consisted of the expansion of old canal and qanat systems and the addition of new canals/qanats in nearly all portions of the plain. The farming complexes, such as those illustrated at DL-274 and DL-275 (Pl. 20) near the southwestern margins of the plain, are excellent examples of the latter. Other new modifications included the construction of terraces and check dams in the western part of the plain, and the introduction of dry-farming water and soil management technology to the piedmont zone.

These modifications permitted the inhabitants of the Deh Luran Plain to occupy and utilize an additional surface area of some four hundred square kilometers, or approximately 40 percent of the total area of the plain. Thus, Sasanian and 7<sup>th</sup> Century Islamic times appear to have been the apex in terms of the total amount and intensity of land use as well as the maximum population density on the plain. In spite of the different nature of the survey data available from the Diyala, Upper Khuzistan (Susiana), and the Mughan Steppe, the patterns of intensity of land use and technological maximization appear to be generally similar.

Canals and qanats, appear to have increased in number during this period. New systems of canals and qanats, tapping springs and the subterranean aquifers, appear on the piedmont (see Pls. 9 & 19). The water harvesting of piedmont runoff into canals excavated nearly perpendicular to the slope (see canal DL-330 on Pl. 9) may also have been introduced during this period. In addition, if not introduced earlier (Neely & Wright 1994: 200), it seems probable that it was during this period that some of the late Deh Luran qanat systems were constructed to incorporate an ingenious modification of the qanat technology which obtained seepage water from the Mehme and Dawairij Rivers rather than to tap underground aquifers as traditional qanat technology does. The modified qanats did not take water directly from the rivers, but ran parallel to them at distances from ten to fifty meters for stretches of two hundred meters to nearly two kilometers, and then turned in toward the center of the alluvial plain. Water was obtained from the rivers as it percolated through the soil and rock of

the river channel banks into the qanat. This modification of an already existing technology may well have been contrived to serve four purposes, three obvious to the users and one probably not. First, it greatly reduced the amount of silt carried into the systems — a problem that must have been enormous in canal systems that took water directly from the Mehmeh and Dawairij Rivers by means of diversion dams or weirs. Second, the percolation of the water through the riverbanks filtered out vegetal matter and minerals in suspension. Third, it is believed that this filtering process resulted in the deposition of dissolved minerals in solution through evaporation as hardened calcium carbonate (*caliche*) layers at the top of the aqueous zone, thus eliminating their presence in the waters used for domestic and irrigation purposes. Fourth, although the inhabitants of Deh Luran were undoubtedly unaware of it, the filtration of water through riverbanks has been documented as serving to remove microbes and other pollutants (e.g., heavy metals) from water supplies (Hubbs 2004; Ray et al. 2003). Three of these processes reduced the frequent need to clean the systems and slowed soil salinization that probably was gradually affecting crop production. The fourth benefitted the health of the inhabitants of the now larger and more densely populated plain.

***Dry-Farming Water Management Systems.*** In the western portion of the plain, especially in the western and central parts of the piedmont, a second, less impressive water management technology was also apparently introduced, although there is some evidence that this process may have begun in the late Parthian period. The piedmont microenvironment was converted from a sparsely inhabited zone to one of rather dense occupation with the introduction of this new water management technology. To augment Table 1 and Pl. 18, which do not record the presence of undated sites, see Pls. 9 & 19 to note the density of these sites.

Terraces and check-dams were introduced to conserve and renew soils as well as more efficiently distribute and retain rainfall and runoff waters on sections of the alluvial plain and piedmont. Low terrace walls of unmodified dry-laid cobbles and boulders were built at intervals varying with the slope of the terrain and following the contours of the land (Pls. 17, 21). An integral part of this system were small check-dams, or cross-channel terraces, of dry-laid, unmodified cobbles and boulders, constructed at right angles to the flow across intermittent drainages dissecting the plain and piedmont (Pls. 17, 22). Water and soil washing from the



piedmont slopes would flow into the drainages where the check-dams functioned to retain soils and retard runoff so that water would thoroughly soak the soils. Because the small plots behind the check-dams had relatively deep soil deposits, and the fact that the plots received greater amounts of rejuvenating soils and water than the slope terraces, these small areas probably had greater crop productivity and reliability. Such features were likely also constructed to retard headword erosion and the deterioration of the piedmont slope fields. In addition, considering some of the locations of these features *vis-à-vis* canals, it is likely that they also functioned in combination with more usual irrigation techniques. Rainfall could easily have been augmented with water diverted from nearby canals, and it is conceivable that the labor-intensive practice of hand watering (Castetter & Bell 1942; Doolittle 2000; Kirkby 1973; Neely 2005a, b, 2014, 2015; Neely & Caran 2011; Neely et al. 1990) may have been used on the terraces upslope from the canals.

The piedmont agricultural terraces and check-dam systems clustered in distinct units associated with one or more habitation structures (usually having a walled courtyard/compound), one or more small “storage” structures, and frequently one or more rectangular structures reminiscent of cattle pens or “corrals.” Plate 17 is a plane-table map of site DL-194 and illustrates a classic example of one of these units. These distinct socio-economic units may be referred to as: “dry-farming homestead complexes.” Each unit comprised of houses, corrals, farming terraces, and check-dams is usually clearly separated by some twenty-five to one hundred meters from the next. In many cases this separation is further defined by an intermittent drainage, or by a low wall of unmodified dry-laid cobbles and boulders. Sites likely associated with the piedmont homesteads were situated on nearby hilltops (Pl. 17). These hilltop sites comprise several structures, and were found distributed one for every four to six piedmont homesteads. Their locations would have made them good defensible refuges, but there is no other evidence to foster that interpretation.

From these dry-farming homestead complexes we may derive information beyond the apparent technological and architectural data. For example, from the ratio of habitation area to the area of cultivation we may obtain an idea of the area needed to sustain population through the use of dry-farming techniques. Using site DL-194 (Pl. 17) as an example of a piedmont homestead, we find the total living area (including the walled

courtyards/compounds) of the two structures to be 1,088 square meters, or 289 square meters if we only consider the area of the definable rooms. The ratio of total living area (including compounds) to the area under dry-farming cultivation (totaling 16.88 hectares) at DL-194 is 1:155 square meters, or 1:584 square meters if only the area of the definable rooms is used. Unfortunately, there is no comparable exposed architecture on contemporary alluvium sites so that the settlements in the two areas cannot be directly compared.

Sites and structures of this type and size are not usual in most of the population size calculations conducted for Middle Eastern sites (e.g. Adams 1965: 23-25; Pasciuti & Chase-Dunn 2002). Until we complete our study of the late periods of Deh Luran Plain occupation, we are unable to more accurately work out the settlement dynamics for this period. However, until we can achieve that goal, I have chosen a reasonable method from an ethnographic study conducted in 1960-1961 by F. G. L. Gremliza (1962). That study collected data from 55 small communities scattered over an area of about 223 square kilometers just south of the city of Dezful, and about 100 kilometers east of the Deh Luran Plain. Although collected from modern contexts, the small rural communities represented in this study were similar to those being considered in this article. Gremliza (1962: Table 15) reports a population range of from 2.4 to 5.7 persons per room, with a mean of 3.9 (with a standard deviation of 0.6) persons occupying each of the 2,975 rooms in the 2,274 houses his study recorded. Thus, using the site of DL-194 as an example, Gremliza's mean of 3.9 persons per room, and would indicate that the two compounds with a total of seven rooms (Pl. 17) at that site had an estimated population of about 27 persons.

***Spring-Fed Canals with Drop-Tower Gristmills.*** As with the Mehmeh and Dawairij Rivers, the waters of the Ab-i Garm springs (DL-170; see Pl. 9) were managed at an early time (Neely & Wright 1994: 187-188). These sulfurous springs are located high in the piedmont near its juncture with the foothills of the Kuh-i-Siah Range of the Zagros Mountains. While there is a number of other springs similarly located along this break in the topography, evidently only the Ab-i Garm sources, north-northeast of the present town of Deh Luran, were managed.

Perhaps beginning during the Chogha Mami Transitional phase (ca. 5400 - 5200 B.C.E.), but quite likely by the Khazineh phase (ca. 5000

- 4800 B.C.E.), the management of Ab-i Garm waters appears to have been focused on slight modifications of its natural drainage channel (see DL-276A and 276B on Pl. 9). The earliest canals (DL-5; see Pl. 19) to carry Ab-i Garm waters appear to have been dug during either the Sargarab phase (ca. 4000 – 3750 B.C.E.) or more likely the Early Uruk period (ca. 3750 - 3500 B.C.E.) to convey waters to the site of Sargarab (DL-169 – Neely & Wright 1994: 130-138; Wright et al. 1975).

This small canal system was apparently modified and expanded during the Sasanian period. North of DL-169, where secondary natural drainages joining the Ab-i Garm channel were particularly broad or deep and would thereby require the excavation and maintenance of many meters of additional canal to follow the contours properly, an aqueduct of mortared masonry was constructed to span the secondary drainage (Neely 2011). The small canal at first paralleled the Ab-i Garm natural drainage and then continued to course southward while the natural drainage of the Ab-i Garm took a more southwesterly course (Pl. 19).

The spring waters were diverted into the canal system either at the springheads or just downstream. There was no evidence as to exactly how this was accomplished, but a diversion dam or weir seems most likely. The canal system was small, averaging about 1.5 meters wide by 0.6 meters deep, and had been excavated into both faces of the banks of the natural drainage that carried Ab-i Garm waters down slope to the alluvial plain. On the east bank in the northern portion of the system, test trenches were excavated through the canal at right angles to the flow (Pl. 23) to permit an accurate measurement of the gradient. The canals carefully followed the contours of the banks to retain a very gentle, but efficient, grade of about 0.1 percent.

Well-made, tower-like structures of mortared masonry were built against, and partially into, the steep face of the drainage banks (Pls. 19, 24 – Neely 2011). These tower-like structures were constructed at irregular intervals ranging from approximately 50 to 600 meters apart, with an average distance of about 275 meters separating these features. The system was traceable for a straight-line distance of about 6.5 kilometers, within which the remnants of 22 drop-towers were found. The towers received the canalized water and dropped it some 6.5 meters into a continuation of the canal system.

The excavation of one of the drop-towers (Pls. 19, 24) in the northern portion of the system revealed that the towers concentrated the flow of the

water to provide power to drive a millwheel (Neely 2011). This drop-tower gristmill construction is technically termed the “*Arubah* penstock” (Avitsur 1960). The technology of the Deh Luran gristmills was extremely well adapted to the topography and the limited, variable water supply of the region.

Water management features and systems are notoriously difficult to date, however, a direct method of dating was possible with the excavated drop-tower. A ceramic fragment recovered from the masonry (a blue glazed sherd - sample OxL-1349) was assayed at the Research Laboratory for Archaeology and the History of Art at Oxford University by means of Optically Stimulated Luminescence, and has provided an absolute date of  $680 \pm 150$  C.E. The extended use of this canal and gristmill system is suggested by an under-glaze painted sherd (sample OxL-1348), recovered from the spoil bank of the DL-5 canal at site DL-3 (Pl. 19), that was dated by OSL to  $1750 \pm 100$  C.E. An ethnographic study (Neely 2011) indicated that parts of the then defunct gristmill system were refurbished in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, but were again abandoned in 1958.

In the 4.25 kilometers of the canal system south of the excavated gristmill tower the canal first paralleled the Ab-i Garm, then was continued more southward as the natural Ab-i Garm drainage changed course toward the southwest (Pl. 19). From a point just south of the 800-meter contour line the construction of the towers involved a more laborious method. There, trenches were excavated into the piedmont slope so as to duplicate the gently graded canals present in the upper segment of the system. As this canal grade was gentler than that of the piedmont, the trenches excavated were necessarily deeper at their upper ends and became proportionately shallower as they coursed southward. The towers were set into the trenches at their deep, northern extremes. Costa and Wilkinson (1987: 56-76) found similar “buried” towers in the Sohar region of Oman. This portion of the canal system probably was built in response to the need for additional gristmills, the domestic water needs of the adjacent Sasanian and later communities (DL-3, DL-4, DL-168, DL-312/313, 135, and 123 - see Pl. 19), as well as the irrigation needs of fields located on the alluvium immediately south of the central piedmont zone (Neely 2011). Prior to the completion of this canal system, the part of the alluvial plain for which it eventually supplied water would have been useful only for seasonal dry-farming and grazing. Rainfall runoff from the piedmont zone undoubtedly augmenting the Ab-i Garm waters flowing through canal

DL-330, a probable further extension of the DL-5 canal (Pl. 9) that coursed along the toe of the piedmont towards the southeast for about another 15 km. Several other canals (e.g., DL-6) and Qanats (e.g., DL-161) also apparently fed into that piedmont-toe canal (Pl. 19). That canal, in turn, appears to have drained into and augmented canal DL-121 about 2.5 kilometers northeast of Tepe Guran (DL-34), to supply additional water for domestic uses and the irrigation of the fields paralleling the canal further to the southwest (see Pl. 9).

Only one other example of a drop-tower gristmill was recorded during the 1969 survey. That was a gristmill situated in a deep trench cut into the alluvial plain, located just east of qanat/canal system DL-121, and apparently driven by the waters of that system. This drop-tower gristmill is situated just east of the large site of DL-34 (Pl. 9).

This interesting gristmill technology has been found elsewhere in the Middle East (e.g., Avitsur 1960; Beasley 1967, 1977; Costa & Wilkinson 1987; Gardiner & McQuitty 1995; Harverson 1978; Roaf 1999-2000; Wulff 1966: 280-282), as well as in Europe (e.g., Beasley 1963; Goudie 1886), and in the New World (e.g., Gritzner 1974; Neely 1999), and examples are still being reported (e.g., Anonymous 2006; Kirchner 2011).

## Observations

Information and interpretation of land use in earlier periods on the Deh Luran Plain may be found in two monographs (Neely & Wright 1994; Wright & Neely 2010). The present study has benefitted from subsequent analyses and the help of colleagues who have provided excellent comparative data to place Deh Luran into perspective within the Partho-Sasanian spheres.

### *Settlement and Site Patterns*

During Partho-Sasanian times, the Deh Luran Plain displays a pattern of settlement and site change that generally parallels events documented for the Diyala region of east-central Iraq (Adams 1965: 69-83), the Upper Khuzistan (Susiana) Plain of west-central Iran (Adams 1962: 116-117; Wenke 1975, 1987), the Mughan Steppe of northwestern Iran and southern Azerbaijan (Alizadeh & Ur 2007; Ur & Alizadeh 2014), and elsewhere. However, there are differences.

Site locations along canals on the Diyala Plain (Adams 1965: Figure 5), the Susiana Plain (Wenke 1975), and the Mughan Steppe (Alizadeh & Ur 2007; Ur & Alizadeh 2014) seem to be more strategically situated (e.g., at the branchings of major canals) than those of the Deh Luran Plain.

The Deh Luran survey recorded extremely well preserved Partho-Sasanian house and settlement remains (Pls. 10-15). Augmenting these were well-preserved evidences of evidently contemporaneous fields and smaller canal systems (Pls. 17, 20). Obtaining such detailed, but seldom recovered, data has augmented our knowledge of both the site/settlement and subsistence/economic systems for these periods.

Simpson (1996: 99) notes cyclical settlement patterns in the area of the Saddam Dam on the upper Tigris: “The results suggest clear peaks and troughs in settlement densities at different periods: whereas Seleucid, Late Sasanian and Middle-Late Islamic settlements were relatively frequent, those of Parthian/Roman-Early Sasanian and Early Islamic date were rare.” As of this stage of study, I have not been able to discern similar cyclical perturbations in settlement densities on the Deh Luran Plain, but this may be the result of a less refined ceramic chronology.

Both Adams (1965: 73) and Wenke (1975, 1987) observe that while population densities apparently reached their peaks during the Parthian Period in their respective study areas, it was during the Sasanian period that the landscape as well as the settlement and subsistence systems were most affected and modified. The findings of the Deh Luran survey concur with these assessments of the Sasanian period; however, the data suggest that it was during the Sasanian period when the population densities of the Deh Luran Plain peaked. Wenke (1987: 256) supports this finding in his discussion of the Deh Luran Plain. Wenke (1981: 310) also observed that, in spite of apparently rapid population growth, that fertile, irrigable areas were not exploited and there is little to suggest that population pressure was a problem on the Susiana Plain. However, this does not appear to have been the situation on the Deh Luran Plain.

#### *Agriculture vis-a-vis Pastoralism*

In order to better understand the Partho-Sasanian imperial dynamics we need to know the processes by, and extent to, which farmers and herdsmen from the highlands were assimilated into the lowland economies and socio-political systems (Hole 1980; Wenke 1987: 253).



The presence of two distinctive types of sites and agriculture/water management technologies (i.e., the irrigation-based agricultural communities on the alluvium and the dry-farming/pastoral communities on the piedmont) suggest the existence of two distinct, but probably interrelated, subsistence/settlement systems on the Deh Luran Plain. The former of these was a sedentary occupation while the latter was likely of a transhumant nature that developed into a combination of sedentism and transhumance between sedentary settlements that has been documented both archaeologically (Hole 1974, 1978) and ethnographically for the Lurs of Deh Luran and Khuzistan (Lambton 1969; Layard 1846; Whyte 1977).

Following a transhumant pattern between Deh Luran and upland valleys, as documented by Hole (e.g., 1974, 1978, 1979), the pastoralists would have occupied the plain during the winter and sustained themselves through pastoralism and dry-farming. Survey site morphology suggests that at least some of the pastoralists also occupied sedentary/permanent sites on the alluvium, and participated in irrigated agriculture as they do today (Whyte 1977). This may have been an economically directed scenario initiated by the pastoralists themselves that the Parthians and Sasanians encouraged to incorporate transhumant groups as contributing members into their respective Empires. It would have been an approach to maximize the use and productivity of the Deh Luran Plain with minimal disturbances to either the agricultural infrastructure or disruption of the long established pattern of transhumance. Such a scenario presents an alternative to the more traditional cyclical either/or picture of Middle Eastern subsistence systems (e.g., Abdi 2003; Alizadeh & Ur 2007; Salzman 2004; Wilkinson 2003). However, this tentative explanation begs questions regarding the processes involved in such a co-residence: for example, the amelioration of traditional antagonistic relationships (Alizadeh & Ur 2007; Bucellati 1966). These are questions that are difficult to answer through archaeology alone.

The apparently contemporaneous three-part agro-pastoral system, with irrigation agriculture, dry-farming, and pastoralism as integral parts of the subsistence system and the economy, marks the Deh Luran Plain and analogous areas as locations where questions regarding the processes of change, development, and maintenance of such a mixed economy and its socio-political milieu can be effectively studied.

*Water Management and Irrigation Systems*

On a pan-Middle Eastern scale, it is interesting to note that areas located between rivers (e.g., Mesopotamia, Susiana, Mughan Steppe, and Deh Luran) were frequently chosen by groups for agricultural expansion and intensification. However, this choice was most logical considering the access to water and the alluvial soils available.

The majority of the Partho-Sasanian water management and irrigation technology and systems found on the Deh Luran Plain are not unique. Most have earlier origins on the Deh Luran Plain and elsewhere in the Middle East, and those recorded in other regions of the Parthian and Sasanian Empires often appear at a much greater scale of size and complexity. However, two aspects of the Deh Luran Plain water management technology that appear to be unusual are: (1) the modification of some of the qanat systems to offtake waters by a seepage process from flowing rivers, and (2) the design of at least one community (DL-2; fig. 9) to enhance domestic water resources by harvesting rainfall runoff from architectural features into below ground surface cisterns (cf. Neely 2015; Scarborough 2009).

A more complete picture of the nature and density of the canal and qanat systems of the Deh Luran Plain may be seen in the map (Pl. 9) generated by the 1969 survey. Although these systems are extensive, compared to the larger canal networks of Mesopotamia (e.g., Adams 1965: Figures 4, 5; Simpson 2000: Figure 12) and the Susiana Plain (Wenke 1975: Maps 24-28) they are of relatively limited scale. However, the detailed recording of sites of all sizes in relation to canals and qanats has provided a better understanding of the relationships of these two types of features at both a macro- and micro-scale. On a micro-scale, Pl. 20 provides a detailed example of the relationships of secondary and tertiary canals with two evidently associated small Sasanian irrigation agriculture sites.

It is probable that the shallow, salty marsh microenvironmental zone (Pls. 2, 8) is a result of the natural desertification of the plain (Whyte 1977) as well as the human modification of the landscape. Data from excavations (Hole, Flannery & Neely 1969) indicate the presence of a marsh on the plain that provided comestible flora and fauna. The species of flora and fauna found evidence that “sweet” waters characterized the marsh, and settlements in this area declare the marsh area was viable for occupation. However, the settlement patterns of the 8<sup>th</sup> through 10<sup>th</sup> Century Islamic periods imply a slow abandonment, and by post-10<sup>th</sup> Century Islamic

times the plain appears to have been nearly unoccupied. This trend could very well have resulted from, or been exacerbated by, the heavy use of mineral-laden water from the Mehmeh and Dawairij Rivers, which slowly salinated the soils and made cultivation of the lands less and less productive. Thus, the shallow, salt marsh found during our survey is, in fact, very probably a relatively recent phenomenon most likely intensified by the large influx of population in Partho-Sasanian times and perhaps not fully formed until the 10<sup>th</sup> Century Islamic occupation. A generally similar human-induced body of salinated water resulting from irrigation outfalls has been documented for the Amuq Plain of southeastern Turkey (Wilkinson 2000: 176-177). Thus, apart from socio-political reasons, salinization may have been a reason why the Deh Luran Plain was slowly depopulated.

The many canals of the Deh Luran Plain very likely generated a riparian micro-environment along their courses (Wright & Neely 2010: Pl. 6). Such riparian zones would have provided a ready supply of edible and useful plants, and would have been a haven for animals that would have found the zone a source of both water and food prior to their kill or capture for human use. Such animals and plants were a part of the prehistoric diet (Hole, Flannery & Neely 1969; Watson 1979: 68), and were locally gleaned in Deh Luran in 1969 (Neely, personal observations). The availability of these riparian microenvironment subsistence resources along canals has been noted for the American Southwest (Neely 2014; Neely & Murphy 2008) and in the Tehuacán Valley of southern Mexico (Neely 2005b, 2015).

### *Reorganization and Change on the Deh Luran Plain*

Notwithstanding the presence of the Achaemenid Royal Road passing through the plain, probably closely following the path of the present road from Dezful to Deh Luran (Pl. 16), and the presence of some very large sites (e.g., DL-20, DL-32, DL-34), the marginal position occupied by Deh Luran relative to economic and socio-political systems in the greater Middle East during the Early Empires (ca. 2,600 – 210 B.C.E.) has been noted (Hole 1987; Wright & Neely 2010). The role played by Deh Luran in the larger picture remains largely unknown, however, we have been able to document that the settlement patterns for the plain during the early empires were generally similar to those in the more central economic and socio-political regions of the Middle East. Based on the late glazed ceramics

found during the 1969 survey, David Hill (2006) sees the Deh Luran Plain as being well integrated into the Mesopotamian economic system. He observes that the presence of glazed ceramics that were produced in both Northern and Southern Mesopotamia during the Parthian, Sasanian, and Islamic periods indicates a wide range of trade-contacts and communication between the peoples of Deh Luran with the larger communities in the Tigris-Euphrates Basin. Nevertheless, the settlement pattern changes recorded for Deh Luran suggest that in some respects its marginal role continued and that it followed the reorganization that was taking place earlier in the other regions closer to the centers where policies relating to the Parthian and Sasanian Empires were developed. The results of these apparently conflicting findings indicate that neither pottery (most especially glazed pottery) nor settlement patterns may be used alone to evaluate the status of regional integration. From the data at hand, it appears that the Susiana Plain was the earliest of the large regions to see this reorganization (Wenke 1987), with central Mesopotamia following (Adams 1981: 183). Deh Luran evidently more closely follows the dating of central Mesopotamia, but it is not clear which of these two areas was primal. Adams (1981: 183) observes that lags in reorganization and development are: "... in line with the Sasanian pattern of shifting economic investments from one zone to another."

While the Parthians were evidently successful in conducting their political systems, Greek, Latin, and Hebrew documents suggest the Parthian "Empire" was mostly an unstable coalition of vassal states brought periodically under Parthian control (Wenke 1981: 306). It was not until the second half of the fourth century C.E. in the Sasanian period that there was a transformation of political control and administration throughout much of the Middle East that strengthened the economic and socio-political systems (Simpson 1996: 88). Be that as it may, the historical record indicates that the Parthians, and to a much greater extent the Sasanians, were quite successful at integrating member ethnic groups, inaugurating taxation and conscription, expanding and intensifying agriculture and water management, and competing in trade. Archaeological evidence and documents indicate that the Sasanians, perhaps emulating and expanding upon a policy apparently enforced by the kings of the Neo-Assyrian Empire (Ur 2005; Wilkinson et al. 2005), moved tens of thousands of people, sent engineering missions into the most underdeveloped parts of their empire, and literally reshaped the land surface of large areas of the Middle East.

As noted, there are easily recognized changes in the settlement patterns of the Deh Luran Plain beginning in the Parthian Period that evidently accelerated in the Sasanian Period. These changes (i.e., an increasing number of sites, smaller sites, a wider distribution of sites, and the appearance of new architectural forms [e.g., unwallled sites and compounds] in previously little used areas of the plain [e.g., the piedmont zone]) all suggest rather drastic modifications of the economy and/or the socio-political systems.

Considering the foregoing, and perhaps stating the obvious, it is proposed that population growth, the expansion of existing and introduction of new methods of water management and irrigation, and the socio-political developments reflected in the changing settlement and site (community) patterns from ca. 210 B.C.E. to 640 C.E. on the Deh Luran Plain are a result of processes of planned expansion, a program of directed (Spicer 1961, 1962) socio-political and economic change, promoted initially by Parthian leaders but drastically expanded by the Sasanian government. Supporting this hypothesis is documentation indicating that the Sasanians undertook an intensive, well-planned expansion program to build the economy and population, and thereby the power and importance of their empire. The Sasanian kings, primarily Shapur II (C.E. 309-379), Kavadh I (C.E. 488-531), and Chosroes I Anosharwan (C.E. 531-579), fostered the rebuilding and resettlement of entire communities, the incorporation of large numbers of war prisoners within the empire, the encouragement of population growth by providing incentives for marriage and childbearing, and the planning and construction of large-scale public works including irrigation systems and other local and empire-supporting infrastructure (Adams 1965: 69-71; Morony 2004; Nöldeke 1973; Rawlinson 1885: 484-485, 488). This program could have been carried out on the Deh Luran Plain for political reasons to provide a location for the settlement of a newly conquered population, or to relocate part of the rapidly expanding population from densely occupied areas within the empire such as Upper Khuzistan (Susiana) and the Diyala (Adams 1965: 69-71; Neely 1974). Simpson (1996: 88) also observes that: "Population transfers appear to have been effected in order to bolster community loyalty in newly acquired frontier zones ...". I might add that the transfer of certain groups could also serve to remove rebellious factions from potentially hostile areas and resettle them in locations where they lacked the numbers and local prestige to do harm. Reinforcing this hypothesis, Wenke (1987: 257) agrees that:

“... it is not at all unlikely that Deh Luran was chosen for imperially directed development schemes.”

A correlated alternative hypothesis is that this proposed program of development may well have been economic; to use Deh Luran as a “bread-basket” area to provide additional land for the production of badly needed foodstuffs for the rapidly expanding local population as well as that of the greater empire (Howard-Johnston 2008: 124; Neely 1974; Rawlinson 1885: 488), and/or to produce foodstuffs in large quantities for trade and taxes. Wenke (1987: 259) notes that subsistence agricultural systems in many areas gave way, under imperial direction and funding, to the cultivation of foodstuffs the major value of which could be realized only with a centralized system of management, transport, distribution, and, especially, taxation. It was the great agricultural productivity (and the tax potential of this activity) of the regions chosen by the Sasanians for development that was a major force in their political history (Wenke 1987: 253).

The site density findings of the survey lean toward the acceptance of the first hypothesis, while the estimated land productivity (Neely 2011) for the Deh Luran Plain appears to support the second hypothesis. The data lead me to slightly favor of the use of the plain to supply foodstuffs to the rapidly expanding empire, although a sizeable population was probably introduced to the plain to grow and process the crops. Estimates of Deh Luran land productivity vis-à-vis Deh Luran gristmill capability suggest that a grain surplus was produced, and that grain probably had to be shipped to the large gristmills at Shushtar and/or Dezful for processing and distribution (Neely 2011).

No documentation pertaining to the Deh Luran Plain during the rule of the Parthian or Sasanian Empires has been found, and details regarding the lower classes, peasantry, and the relationship of the major centers to the provinces are also lacking (Howard-Johnston 2008: 126). However, from available documentation (e.g., Howard-Johnston 2008: 126; Morony 1976, 1981, 1984) and considering the apparent provincial/ rural nature of the Deh Luran Plain during Sasanian times, it seems reasonable to assume that Deh Luran was a sub-district that may have been overseen by a member of one of the lower of the proposed five grades of *dehij* or *dehik* (*dahlquin*), termed *dihqan* in Arabic; a person holding a low rank just above the peasant class (Howard-Johnston 2008: 126, 128; Lambton 1981: 286; Morony 1976: 45–46, 1984: 129; Tafazzoli 2000: 38–59). Brosius (2006: 156, 184) states that the *dehkanan* (i.e., *dahlquin*) were an intermediate class



between the landed aristocracy and the peasants, created by Khosrow I to ameliorate the imbalance between rich and poor farmers. From the little that is known of the dahlquin, it appears that their roles relative to the peasantry and the upper classes were not well defined and rather flexible (Morony 1984). Our knowledge of the Sasanian socio-political organization and operations is provided by all too skeletal hierarchical bureaucratic ranking lists, which are inconsistent in their content and debated (Karimian 2008; Rubin 1995). While it has generally been accepted that an organization of four classes characterized the Sasanian Empire, there apparently was flexibility (Howard-Johnston 2008: 127; Lambton 1981: 285–287) and a crossing of class boundaries (Morony 1984: 184). This fluidity boded well for the existence of some degree of autonomy in remote rural regions. Considering the foregoing, as well as the tolerance of local socio-political mores by the preceding Achaemenids (Brosius 2006: 1–2), the prevailing tradition of conquerors to allow a measure of social and political continuity and freedom to the conquered (Tao 2007; Wiesehöfer 2007a, b), the egalitarian doctrine of the Mazdak religion (Brosius 2006: 195–196; Daryaee 2008: 68–70), and the autonomy permitted in Peroz's (A.D. 459–484) reign due to a great drought and famine (Brosius 2006: 185), it is proposed that the occupants of the Deh Luran Plain, and the inhabitants of similar provincial and rural areas within the Empire, were not under an oppressive totalitarian rule, but had a degree of autonomy that has been little recognized. This autonomy was probably most like that of the “small-holder” or “householder” as described by Netting (1993). A hypothesis may be proposed that Deh Luran existed as a marginal or provincial rural segment of the Sasanian Empire, and that the inhabitants of this relatively remote region, while still having all of the attendant responsibilities (e.g., sharecropping and taxation), probably operated economically and socio-politically on a much simpler level as a relatively autonomous peasant population that had only minimal ties with the empire and its officials. Unfortunately, however, only circumstantial evidence is currently available to support this hypothesis. In contrast to Simpson's (2003, 2008) insightful papers, presenting a reconstruction of the diet and daily life conditions in a Sasanian urban context (i.e., the city-site of Merv), little is known of the daily life, economic, and socio-political conditions of the lower classes from both urban and rural settings of the Empire. On the other hand, this hypothesis is supported by widespread evidence that has great time-depth. Archaeological, ethnohistorical, and ethnological data from the Middle

East (Fernea 1970; Lambton 1969; Rost 2011), Mexico (Enge & Whiteford 1989; Evans 1990; Hunt 1972; Hunt & Hunt 1974; Pérez Rodríguez 2006; Ramírez Sorensen 1998, 2008; Smith & Price 1994), the American Southwest (Hunt et al. 2005), and other locations throughout the world (Lansing 2005, 2006; Netting 1993; Scarborough et al. 2000), point to households and villages in the past and present, existing at various levels of socio-political organization from the tribe to the state, as the primary decision-making entities in a large number of matters, including agricultural pursuits and the construction of water management systems, based on the environment and long-term cultural mores. These cases document the agriculturalist as having cooperative reciprocal obligations with his neighbors, so that there are both temporary and permanent corporate groups that seldom include persons from more remote locations than the household, village, and multi-village levels. This certainly was true for the occupants of the Deh Luran Plain in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Abdullah Javadi, personal communication 1969), and as I observed in 1969.

## Conclusions

Deh Luran has a long history of internally developed water management (Neely & Wright 1994; Wright & Neely 2010). However, because of the history of water management in other parts of the Middle East, it is appropriate to consider that some of the technology, features, and systems may have been brought into the Deh Luran region and modified to the situations at hand. These modifications were probably the result of adapting tried-and-true techniques to the Deh Luran Plain to permit increases in crop production through the utilization of previously little-occupied and cultivated portions of the plain, as well as improvements in grain processing through the use of drop-tower gristmills to accommodate at least a portion of the increased productivity. Such modifications would have facilitated the introduction of foreign peoples for various socio-political reasons as well as the growth of the local population. Additional work on the plain may provide evidence of those techniques and technologies introduced and those internally developed on the plain.

Currently the amount of land cultivated and the productivity of the land in Deh Luran are far less than estimates based on archaeological data and ethnohistorical documentation, due, at least in part, to desertification and the present highly salinated nature of the plain's soils. Estimates of the

productivity of the gristmills and ethnographic consumption data lend themselves to an estimated Deh Luran population that is essentially the same population size as that of 1969, contradicting archaeological evidence for a larger population during the Sasanian period (Neely 2011). While this disparity is recognized, unfortunately, it cannot be explained at this time. The answers to some of the questions that arise regarding this problem may provide explanations for this disparity: were the drop-tower gristmills dedicated to a small segment of Deh Luran's Sasanian population? Will querns be found in many of the small, unexcavated Sasanian sites present? Did flour form a minor part of the diet on the plain in Sasanian times?

A comparison of continually occupied and/or reoccupied sites provides some further reinforcement of the proposition made concerning the directed changes taking place on the Deh Luran Plain in Partho-Sasanian times. It also suggests a continuity of Partho-Sasanian economic and socio-political policy into the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> Century Islamic occupations. Only seven (23%) of the 31 sites that have been identified as having Parthian occupations on the Deh Luran plain were continually occupied sites founded in the preceding period. However, 30 (97%) of these 31 Parthian sites showed continuity of occupation during the subsequent Sasanian Period. Continuing this line of inquiry, I found that 60 (88%) of the 68 sites occupied during the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> Century Islamic occupations had been occupied during the preceding Sasanian Period. Using these data, which will probably be modified somewhat with our ongoing attempts to refine the temporal placement of the Deh Luran sites, we may tentatively compare the relative impact of economic and socio-political change from pre-Parthian to Parthian, Parthian to Sasanian, and Sasanian to Early Islamic times. This comparison is based on a slight revision of Adams' (1965: 81) proposition that the pattern of founding Early Islamic sites near abandoned Sasanian sites, but on previously unoccupied land: "... suggests that the Sasanian abandonment was associated with a social upheaval sufficient to break off the tradition of residence at most of the Sasanian sites; ...". The above comparative data on continuity of occupation and/or reoccupation suggest that on the Deh Luran Plain there was a significant difference between pre-Parthian and Parthian economic and socio-political mores and that there was a high positive correlation and continuity between Parthian and Sasanian practices. However, unlike Adams' findings on the Diyala Plain, these same data suggest that there evidently was also a high positive correlation and continuity between the Sasanian and Early Islamic economic and

socio-political systems on the Deh Luran Plain! This latter positive correlation may well substantiate the more conservative rural nature of the plain and may be reflected by our difficulty in separating the Late Sasanian from the Early Islamic pottery.

Several scholars, including Adams (1965: 73, 82-83), have stated that a continuous process of sociopolitical integration or “centralization” of power has resulted in, or played a major role in, changes toward urbanization and increased population density. Attempts to define the nature of this centralization have placed the emphasis of research on the ancient centers of economic and socio-political power in the Middle East. I submit that it would be enlightening to approach this problem from the opposite direction. By studying the more marginal regions we may obtain new and quite likely different perspectives as to the role and status of the various parts within and comprising the larger sphere of the centralization process. For example, to what degree did the centralized authority control relatively marginal regions such as the Deh Luran Plain and the Mughan Steppe? I suspect there was a degree of economic and socio-political autonomy enjoyed by the inhabitants of these regions that has not yet been fully recognized or appreciated. The question that immediately arises is: what was the degree of autonomy enjoyed and how was it expressed?

Notwithstanding the forces involved in the population growth, technological development, and socio-political changes, the settlement and site patterning suggest a condition in Deh Luran that does not correlate with the traditional thoughts on Parthian and Sasanian socio-political relationships. In spite of the presence of the Royal Road and large sites (e.g. DL-2, DL-12), the dispersed population and the presence of numerous small and unwalled sites appears to be a reflection of the rural nature of the area, and suggests a detachment from direct control of the socio-political powers of the empire to which it belonged. Furthermore, the settlement and site patterns found point to a changing economy (Wenke 1981: 313) as well as number of related factors such as the residence by a population primarily organized and operating as a small cooperating corporate groups that were largely autonomous. It is evident that the Sasanian state ruled the Deh Luran Plain from afar, but the question remains as to its actual affects on the Deh Luran population.

The picture of Deh Luran during the Parthian and Sasanian periods is muddled not only by the lack of documentation on the plain, but also by the little we know of the smaller, more rural enclaves of those empires and

the daily lifeways of the people that occupied those communities. As noted above, recent ethnographic studies have shown that, in spite of the presence or indications of state-like political control, that rural peoples frequently act in an independent, autonomous fashion, and are able to successfully complete monumental construction tasks as cooperating small corporate groups. Archaeological, ethno-historical, and ethnological evidence point to Deh Luran playing such a rural/provincial role in the Sasanian Empire, implying probability that the population operated economically and socio-politically on a relatively simple and autonomous agrarian level with minimal ties with the empire.

Because Deh Luran is now, and for most of its long history of occupation probably was, an out of-the-way, marginal, or provincial region, characterized by a somewhat less-than-ideal environmental setting, it also bodes well for providing well-preserved interesting and valuable information on the processes of acculturation involved in directed technological, economic, and socio-political change that led to the economic and social expansion of large and developed political units — the Parthian and Sasanian Empires. Further detailed investigations in this and analogous regions should also provide data on certain aspects of the operational systems of the Parthian and Sasanian periods not readily accessible through the study of large nuclear population and political centers.

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Table 1. Chronological Placement of Datable Late Site Occupations on the Deh Luran Plain.  
The key identifying the ceramic types will be found at the end of the table.

Site Number	Parthian or Earlier	Sasanian and 7th Century Islamic	Eighth/Ninth Century Islamic	Tenth Century Islamic	Post - Tenth Century Islamic	Notes and Independent Dating Method (s)
DL-1				Ω	Ω	Cave – no visible architecture.
DL-2	B, W, X, Ω	P, X, Ω	A, ES, C, L, W, PM, SG, Ω	LP, Ω	UG-B, Ω	Probably the largest site on the Deh Luran Plain during the Sasanian period. Total area: 113 ha.
DL-3		Ω	SG, Ω			Habitation site associated with DL-5.
DL-4		Ω				Habitation site associated with DL-5.
DL-5		X, Ω	Ω		UG-B	Canal - Gristmill System. Drop-Tower Mill = 680+150 AD (OxL-1349). Isolated Artifact = 1750+100 AD (OxL-1348).
DL-6		Ω	SG, Ω			NW to SE trending Canal Segment.
DL-7		Ω	Ω			Reoccupied early site (Neely and Wright 1994: 31-33). Dating uncertain. Highly disturbed by modern constructions.
DL-8	Ω	Ω	Ω			Reoccupied early site (Wright and Neely 2010: 24).
DL-9		Ω	Ω			Six small mounds or platforms.
DL-10		Ω	Ω	LS, Ω		One mound with a single, multi-roomed foundation atop.
DL-12	W, Ω	P, Ω	ES, SG, Ω	LS, Ω		Large site with many structures visible.
DL-13		Ω				Qanat and Canal. Dated by technology used and apparently associated sites.
DL-15		Ω				Reoccupied early site (Neely and Wright 1994: 44-47).



Site Number	Parthian or Earlier	Sasanian and 7th Century Islamic	Eighth/Ninth Century Islamic	Tenth Century Islamic	Post - Tenth Century Islamic	Notes and Independent Dating Method (s)
<b>DL-16</b>		Ω	ES, Ω			Three small mounds bordering a small old canal.
<b>DL-17</b>		P, Ω	A, Ω	Ω		L-shaped platform, house foundations, and canals.
<b>DL-18</b>		P				Reoccupied early site (Neely and Wright 1994: 48-53).
<b>DL-20</b>	B, Ω	P, Ω	ES, C, WM, PM, Ω	LP, LS, Ω		Reoccupied early site (Neely and Wright 1994: 57-67; Wright and Neely 2010: 25-45).
<b>DL-24</b>		Ω	Ω			Reoccupied early site (Neely and Wright 1994: 78-81; Wright and Neely 2010: 46-51).
<b>DL-27</b>	X, Ω	Ω	ES, Ω			Reoccupied early site (Neely and Wright 1994: 83-84; Wright and Neely 2010: 84 & 86).
<b>DL-28</b>			Ω	Ω		Reoccupied early site (Neely and Wright 1994: 85-88).
<b>DL-32</b>	Ω	P, X, Ω				Reoccupied early site (Cohen 1981; Neely and Wright 1994: 97-99; Wright and Neely 2010: 51-57).
<b>DL-33</b>		X, Ω				Reoccupied early site (Neely and Wright 1994: 99-101).
<b>DL-34</b>	B, X, Ω	X, Ω	A, Ω	Ω		Reoccupied early site (Neely and Wright 1994: 102-103; Wright and Neely 2010: 58-67). 490+180 AD (OxL-1350).
<b>DL-35</b>	B, W, X, Ω	X, Ω	A, ES, Ω	Ω		Reoccupied early site (Wright and Neely 2010: 68-75). Coins - Parthian Period.
<b>DL-36</b>	W, Ω	P, X, Ω	L, SG, Ω	LP, LS, Ω	UG-B, Ω	Large site with many mounds. 830+250 AD (OxL-1352). 1290+150 AD (OxL-1351).

DL-38	W, Ω	P, X, Ω	A, ES, WM, SG, Ω	LP, LS, Ω	Ω	Large site, two platforms, 8 mounds, and canals.
DL-39		Ω	Ω			Large site, similar to DL-38.
DL-40		Ω	Ω			A walled town, many mounds, and associated canals.
DL-41		Ω	Ω			Large site, similar to DL-38 (Wright and Neely 2010: 76-81).
DL-43		Ω	Ω			Reoccupied early site (Neely and Wright 1994: 104).
DL-44	B	P, Ω				Three small mounds overlaid by a modern black-tent camp.
DL-45		Ω	Ω			One large and one small mound overlaid by a modern black-tent camp.
DL-48		Ω	Ω			Small platform with a surrounding canal, similar to DL-43.
DL-49		Ω	Ω			Five small mounds along a canal.
DL-51		Ω				A 25 by 50 m platform with 3 mounds atop.
DL-52		Ω	ES, Ω	LP, LS, Ω		Three platforms, two with mounds and plazas. Area of site: 3.2 ha.
DL-53		Ω				Small mound, probably part of DL-52 or 54.
DL-54	Ω	Ω				Reoccupied early site (Neely and Wright 1994: 105-109; Wright and Neely 2010: 84-85).
DL-55		Ω				Mound (22 by 30 m), little pottery, much flaked stone.
DL-56	B, W, Ω	P, X, Ω	SG, Ω	Ω		Large site, many mounds (one 5 m high), walls, columns, canals.
DL-57		Ω	Ω			Six small mounds in two clusters, several house foundations visible.

Site Number	Parthian or Earlier	Sasanian and 7th Century Islamic	Eighth/Ninth Century Islamic	Tenth Century Islamic	Post - Tenth Century Islamic	Notes and Independent Dating Method (s)
DL-58	B, W	P, Ω				One 90 by 160 m mound bordered by canals.
DL-59		X, Ω	ES, SG, Ω			Large platform with 14 mounds atop.
DL-62	B, W	P, Ω	C, ES, Ω	LP, Ω		Reoccupied early site (Neely and Wright 1994: 112-115).
DL-63	Ω	Ω	SG, Ω	Ω		Large site, 78 small and 7 medium-size mounds.
DL-68		P				Twelve by 30 m mound next to canals.
DL-71			ES, Ω	Ω		Reoccupied early site (Neely and Wright 1994: 116-117).
DL-72			SG, Ω	Ω		Fifty-seven by 62 m platform, 7 mounds, foundations, walls.
DL-73			SG, Ω	Ω		Two mounds (24 by 32 and 10 by 33 m). Site area: 1.1 ha.
DL-74	B, W, Ω	P, Ω	A, ES, WM, SG, Ω	LP, LS, Ω	UG-B, Ω	Large site, large platform, many mounds. Sites DL-72, 73, 74 all one site? 1230+330 AD (OxL-1353).
DL-75		Ω				Platform (215 m in circumference) with two mounds atop.
DL-85		Ω	Ω			Reoccupied early site (Neely and Wright 1994: 119-123).
DL-88		Ω	Ω			Small site next to a canal.
DL-89		Ω	Ω			Reoccupied early site (Neely and Wright 1994: 123).
DL-90		P, Ω				Reoccupied early site (Neely and Wright 1994: 123).
DL-100		P, Ω	Ω			Small site between two secondary canals.

<b>DL-104</b>			Ω	Ω				Reoccupied early site (Neely and Wright 1994: 124-130; Wright and Neely 2010: 84-85).
<b>DL-105</b>			Ω	Ω				Reoccupied early site (Neely and Wright 1994: 124-130).
<b>DL-108</b>			Ω	Ω				Small site between two old canals.
<b>DL-111</b>	W, X, Ω		Ω	Ω				Platform (75 by 90 m) supporting 3 mounds. Site area: 2.9 ha.
<b>DL-112</b>			Ω					One mound (45 by 60 m). May be part of the DL-104, 105, 108, 111 complex.
<b>DL-113</b>					Ω	Ω		Small site located between a primary and a secondary canal.
<b>DL-132</b>	W, Ω		Ω					Small farming site near edge of alluvium.
<b>DL-138</b>			Ω	Ω				Piedmont dry-farming and herding site.
<b>DL-150</b>			Ω					Piedmont site, with small qanat –irrigated (?) fields.
<b>DL-171</b>			Ω					Structure (15 by 18m), north of many dry-farming terraces. Probably a part of DL-172.
<b>DL-172</b>	Ω		Ω	Ω				Three houses, each with a compound, situated in the mouth of a canyon.
<b>DL-194</b>			Ω	Ω				Two houses, each with a compound, many terraces and check dams.
<b>DL-195</b>			Ω					Small dry-farming complex with terraces and check dams.
<b>DL-219</b>	Ω		Ω	ES, WM, PM, Ω				Site (area: 1.2 ha) with small mounds and foundations that lies between canals.
<b>DL-220</b>			Ω					Site with one mound (9 by 25 m) and several foundations.

Site Number	Parthian or Earlier	Sasanian and 7th Century Islamic	Eighth/Ninth Century Islamic	Tenth Century Islamic	Post - Tenth Century Islamic	Notes and Independent Dating Method (s)
DL-222		X, Ω	SG, Ω			Reoccupied early site (Neely and Wright 1994: 138-139).
DL-223		Ω				Mound (25 by 32 m) with 7-room house with a compound (19 by 25 m) atop.
DL-224		Ω				Circular (Diam: 9.5 m) and rectangular (3 by 5.5 m) stone foundations among many terraces.
DL-225	B	Ω				Three mounds, one with a 4-room house with a compound atop.
DL-226		Ω			GLAZED TILE	Mound (40 by 50 m) with a foundation atop.
DL-227		Ω				Three+ room house (5 by 14 m) with a compound.
DL-228		Ω				Mound (25 by 25m) of boulders in mortar, on a high terrace above the Mehmeh River.
DL-230		Ω	ES, Ω			Many dry-farming terraces and check dams (Area: 5 ha).
DL-231		Ω	Ω			Small platform with a 3-room foundation with a compound atop.
DL-232		Ω				Three small mounds, one foundation (Total circumference: 400 m).
DL-233		Ω				Small mound, 2 foundations, with terraces and check dams.
DL-235			ES, Ω			Two small (4 by 7 m) mounds near drainage with checkdams.
DL-236		Ω	ES, Ω	LS, Ω		Platform (70 by 70 m) bordered to N and S by alignments of one-meter square rock-piles.

<b>DL-238</b>	B	Ω	Ω	Ω	Ω	Mound (7 by 9 m) with terraces and rock-piles.
<b>DL-239</b>		Ω				Platform (9 by 12 m) and foundation (5 by 10 m) with terraces and check dams.
<b>DL-240</b>		Ω				Reoccupied early site (Neely and Wright 1994: 139).
<b>DL-241</b>		Ω				Reoccupied early site (Neely and Wright 1994: 140-141).
<b>DL-242</b>	Ω	P, Ω	ES, Ω	LS		Platform (22 by 30 m) and house foundations. Site circumference: 300 m.
<b>DL-243</b>		Ω				Platform (5 by 10 m) with a house foundation atop.
<b>DL-244</b>	B	Ω	PM, Ω	Ω		Complex of 12 small mounds. Site circumference: 585 m.
<b>DL-247</b>			ES, Ω			Reoccupied early site (Neely and Wright 1994: 142-145).
<b>DL-248</b>		Ω				Reoccupied early site (Neely and Wright 1994: 146-147).
<b>DL-250</b>	B, Ω	Ω		LS		Platform with a 2-room house with a compound (18 by 25 m) atop.
<b>DL-251</b>	B	Ω				Eight small house mounds along an old canal.
<b>DL-252</b>	W	Ω	C, Ω			Seven small platforms (2 are L-shaped). Site area: 1.44 ha.
<b>DL-253</b>		Ω	ES, Ω	LP, LS, Ω		Three small structures, each with a compound, and field terraces.
<b>DL-254</b>		Ω	ES, L, Ω			Platform (40 by 85 m) with a L-shaped and an oval mound atop.
<b>DL-255</b>		Ω				Mound (15 by 24 m), between a qanat shaft branching.



Site Number	Parthian or Earlier	Sasanian and 7th Century Islamic	Eighth/Ninth Century Islamic	Tenth Century Islamic	Post - Tenth Century Islamic	Notes and Independent Dating Method (s)
DL-256	B	Ω				Small mound (8 by 20 m), near a canal that overlies a qanat.
DL-257		Ω				Two small mounds with one foundation eroding out.
DL-262		P, Ω				Reoccupied early site (Neely and Wright 1994: 147-148).
DL-263		Ω				Mound (8 by 23 m) with much flaked stone.
DL-264		Ω				Two small mounds. Site circumference: 350 m.
DL-271		Ω				Small farming site next to an old canal.
DL-272		P, Ω				Small farming site next to an old canal. South of DL-271.
DL-274		Ω	Ω			Small farming site. Old canals and fields nearby.
DL-275		Ω	Ω			Small farming site. Old canals and fields nearby.
DL-278		Ω				Small farming site between two large canals.
DL-281	P					Small farming site between two large canals.
DL-282		P, Ω	Ω			Small farming site between two small canals.
DL-286		Ω				Reoccupied early site (Neely and Wright 1994: 149-155).
DL-290			A, Ω			Reoccupied early site (Neely and Wright 1994: 155).
DL-291	Ω	Ω	Ω			Platform (28 by 35 m) with mound (15 by 35 m) atop.

DL-294	Ω				One platform (30 by 70 m), near a canal branching.
DL-298	P, Ω	Ω			Four-room house with a compound. Total size: 10 by 13 m.
DL-303		ES, Ω	Ω		At least 9 stone semi-circular structures. Site circumference: 350 m.
DL-304	Ω				House with a compound (25 by 40 m). Site circumference: 500 m.
DL-305	Ω	A, Ω			Three-room house foundation. Total size: 4 by 8 m.
DL-307	Ω				Two house foundations (3 by 7 m & 4 by 5 m) with 2 field walls (55m & 1,350 m).
DL-310	Ω				Two multi-room house foundations, both with a compound. Total site area: 0.72 ha.
DL-311	Ω				A 6-room structure (4 by 14 m), much flaked stone.
DL-312	Ω				Reoccupied early site (Neely and Wright 1994: 160-161).

SYMBOLS KEY:

A:	APPLIQUE DECORATION.	LP:	PAINTED DESIGNS / LINES / PSEUDO-KUFIC ON GLAZED BACKGROUND.
B:	BLACK GLAZE.	L:	LUSTER.
W:	WHITE GLAZE.	WM:	WHITE MAJOLICA.
P:	PEA-GREEN / OLIVE GLAZE.	PM:	PRESS MOLDED.
B/B:	BLUE GLAZE ONE SURFACE / BLACK OBVERSE.	SG:	SGRAFFATO.
LP:	LATE PAINTED.	UG-B:	UNDERGLAZE BLUE.
ES:	EARLY SPLASH (WHITE OR YELLOW - BASE GLAZE).	X:	DIAGNOSTIC RIM (APPLIED TO SASANIAN AND EARLIER CERAMICS).
LS:	LATE SPLASH (OLIVE / PEA-GREEN - BASE GLAZE).	Ω:	UNGLAZED PLAIN AND/OR SURFACE TEXTURED CERAMICS
C:	COBALT.		

NOTE: Rows showing no symbols, “blank rows”, represent sites with one or more undiagnostic turquoise-colored glazed sherds, and as such could represent any time between the Late Parthian and the tenth century Islamic periods. This table is modified from Hill (2006:Table B.10).

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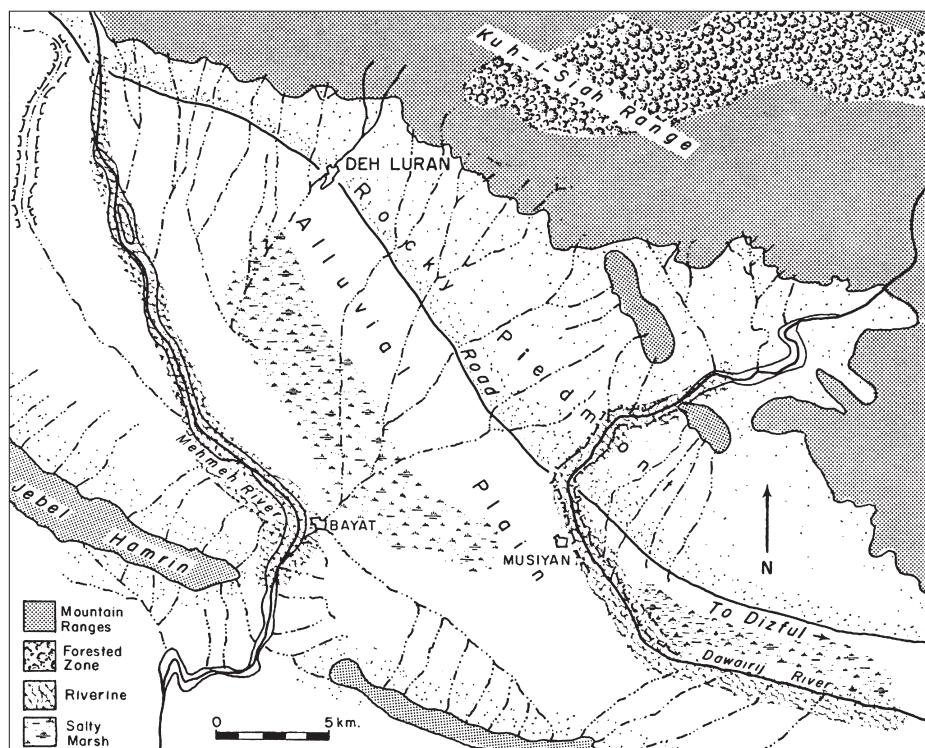
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Pl. 1. The location of the Deh Luran Plain in relation to the Diyala Plain and the Upper Khuzistan (Susiana) Plain.



Pl. 2. Plan view of the Deh Luran Plain, showing the approximate boundaries of the four microenvironmental zones defined in the text.



Pl. 3. Photographic overview of the rocky piedmont zone. Looking northeast from DL-2 toward the Kuh-i-Siah Range of the Zagros Mountains.



Pl. 4. Photograph of the Mehme River, illustrating the riverine zone. Note the depth of the river below the alluvial plain. Looking north, with Tepe Farukhabad (DL-32) in the center background.





Pl. 5. The alluvial plain, looking southeast from DL-2. The southern edge of the rocky piedmont zone (fore- and middle-ground) may be seen to blend into the alluvial plain (middle- and background). The two arrows point to tepe/tell sites situated near the northern edge of the plain.



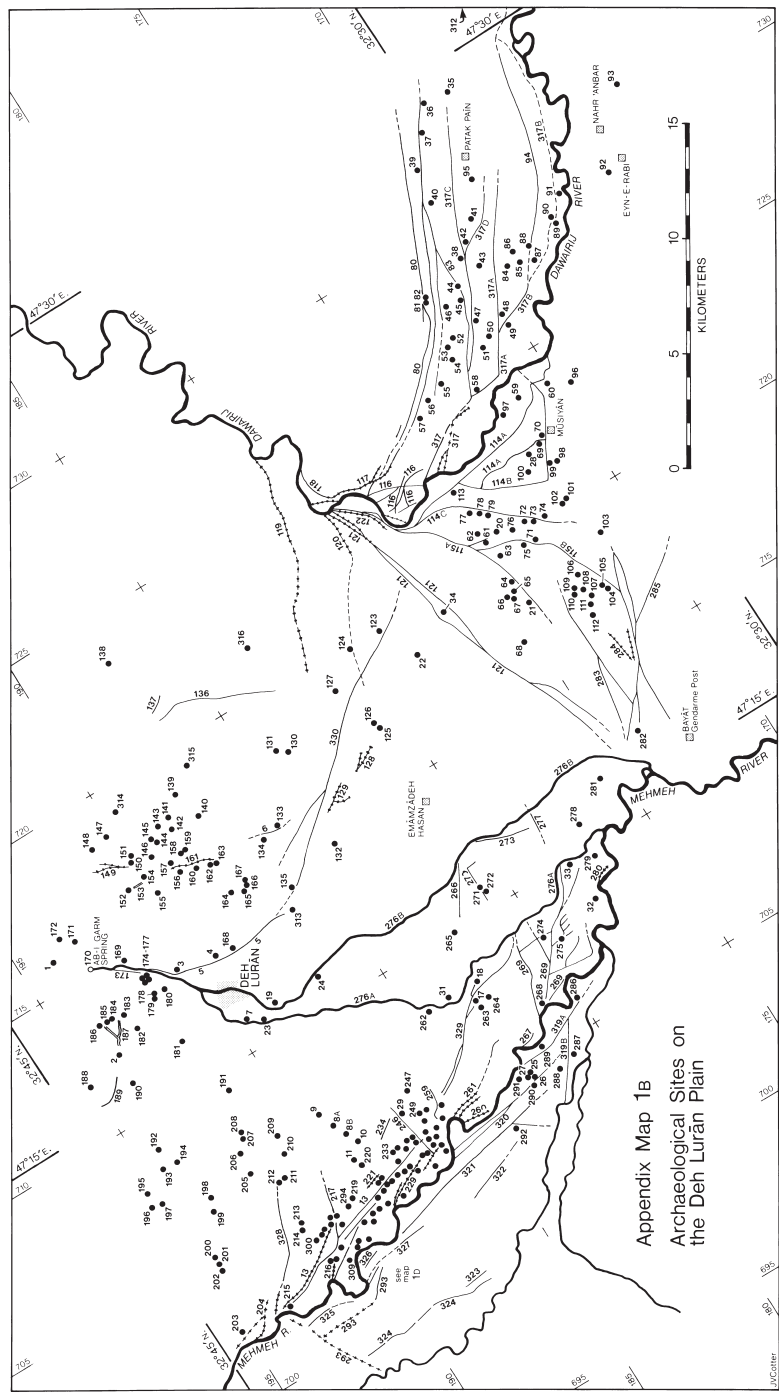
Pl. 6. A view looking northwest across the alluvial plain, with the Kuh-i-Siah Range of the Zagros Mountains in the background. The late afternoon October lighting clearly delineates large and small tepe/tell sites.



Pl. 7. A view looking southwest across the alluvial plain. Tepe Musiyan (DL-20), the largest site on the alluvial plain, is in the background. Note the several generations of canals clearly visible in the fore- and middle-ground.



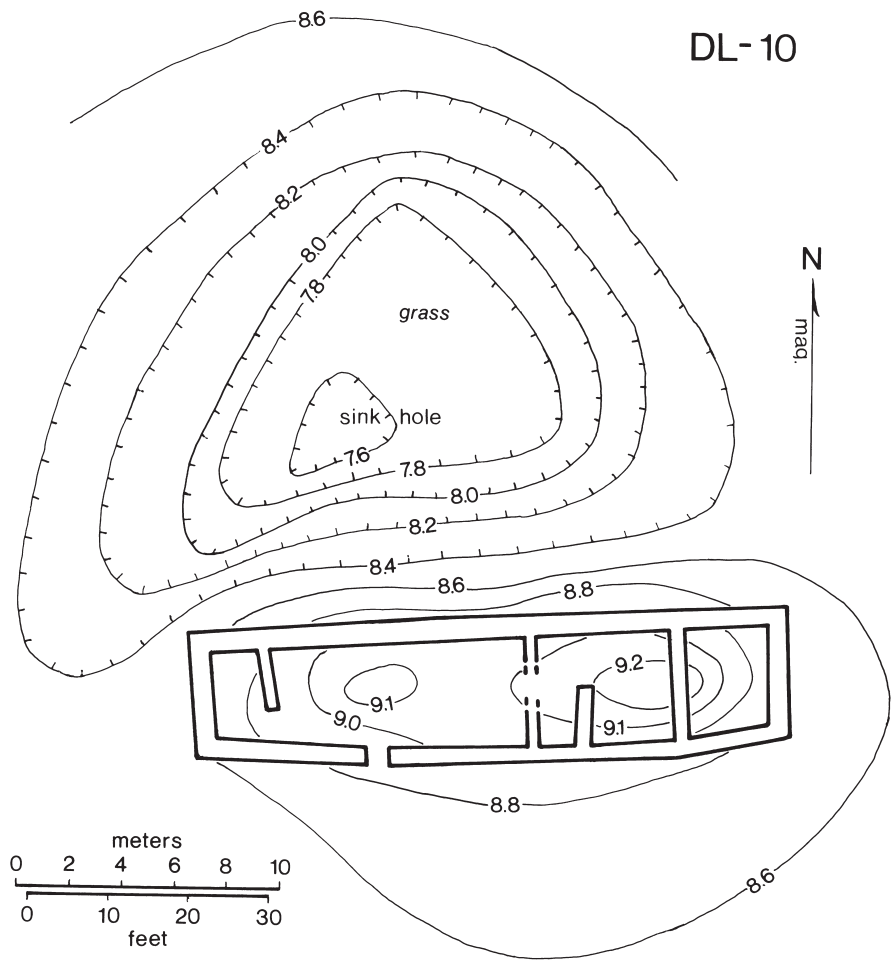
Pl. 8. The shallow, salty marsh, looking north. This photograph was taken during the month of October just after a light rain. Traces of mineral salts appear as a thin white crust in the upper-middle-ground.



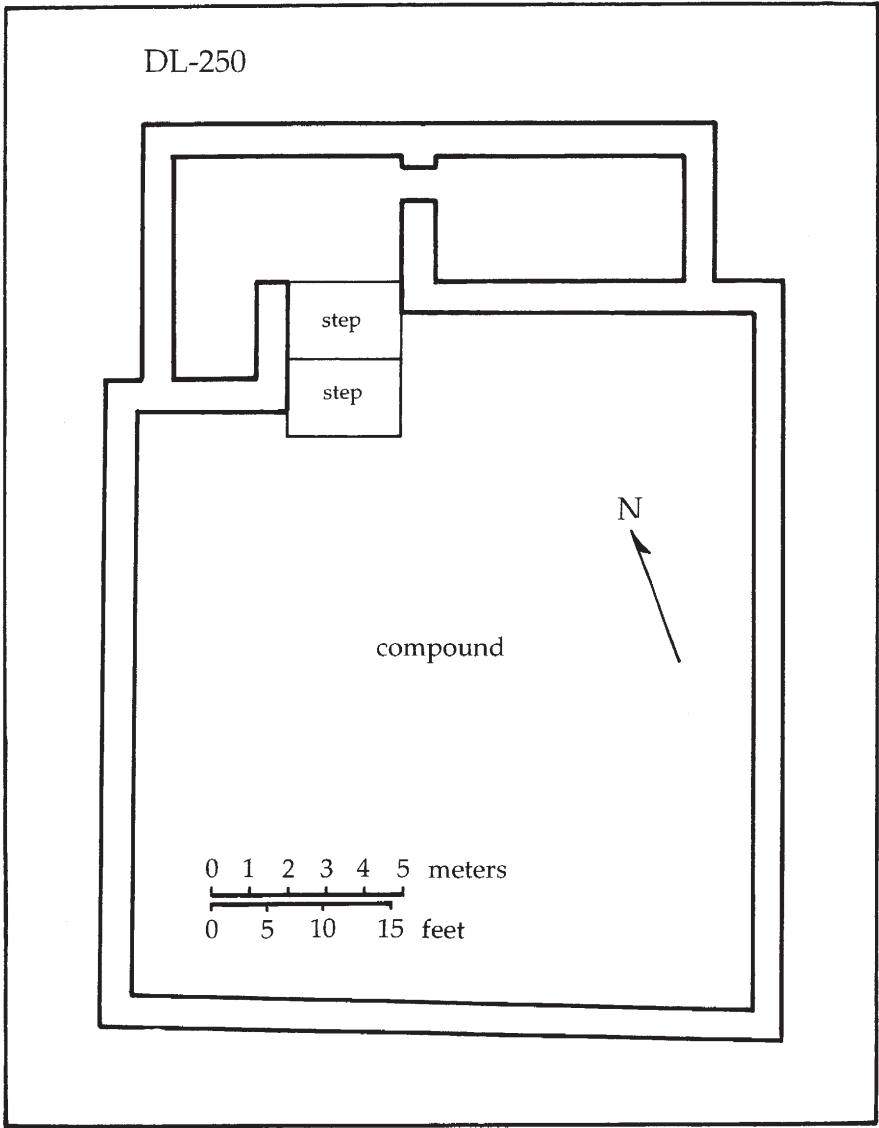
Pl. 9. A map of the Deh Luran Plain showing the locations of archaeological sites and water management features. Thin solid lines indicate canals, thin broken lines denote probable qanats, and small dots connected by a line represent qanat systems. (After Neely and Wright 1994: Appendix Map 1B).



Pl. 10. Site DL-10. Photograph of the remains of a small irrigation agriculture homestead on the northwestern portion of the alluvial plain that was constructed during the Sasanian Period (see Pl. 11).

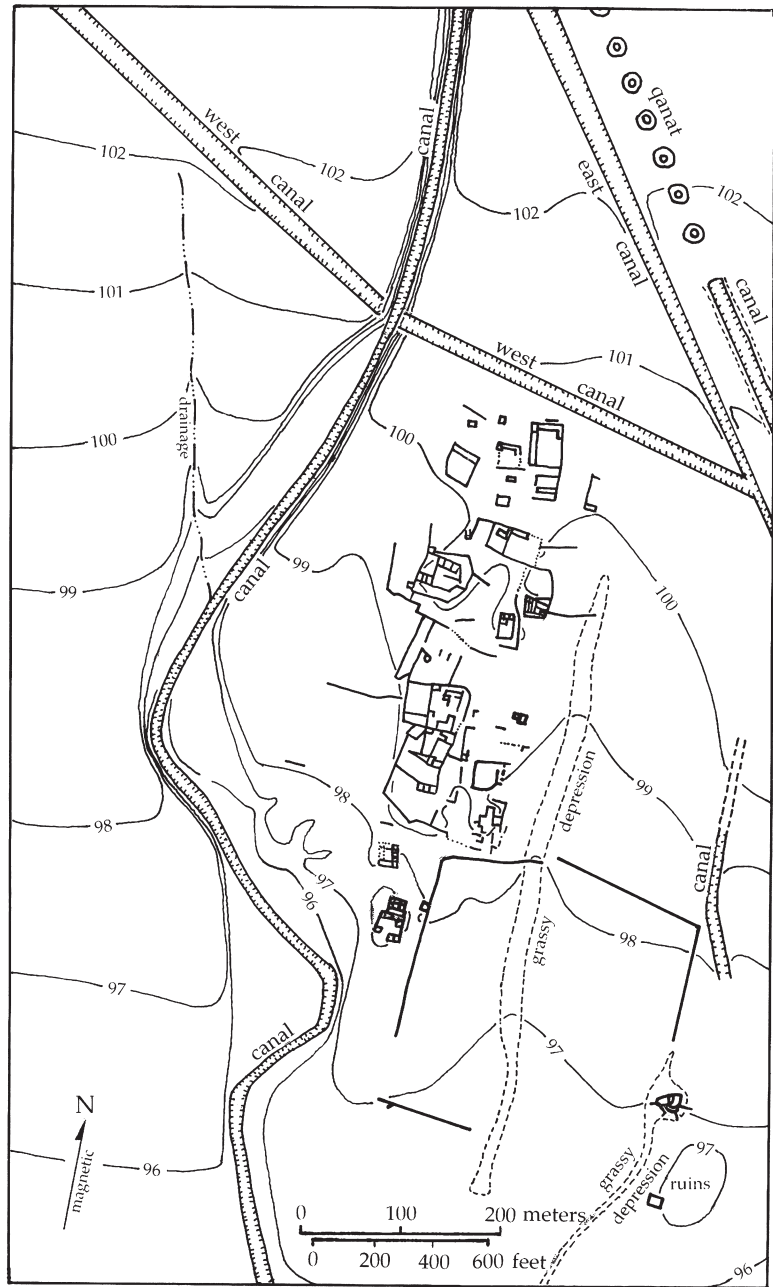


Pl. 11. Plan view of site DL-10, a small irrigation agriculture homestead on the northwestern portion of the alluvial plain constructed during the Sasanian Period. The depression to the north of the structure may have resulted from the excavation of clay as building material, and may have subsequently been used as a small reservoir for domestic water storage. The contours represent metric distances below a hypothetical datum of 10 meters.



Pl. 12. Plan view of site DL-250, an irrigation agriculture courtyard/compound homestead on the northwestern portion of the alluvial plain constructed during the Parthian Period.

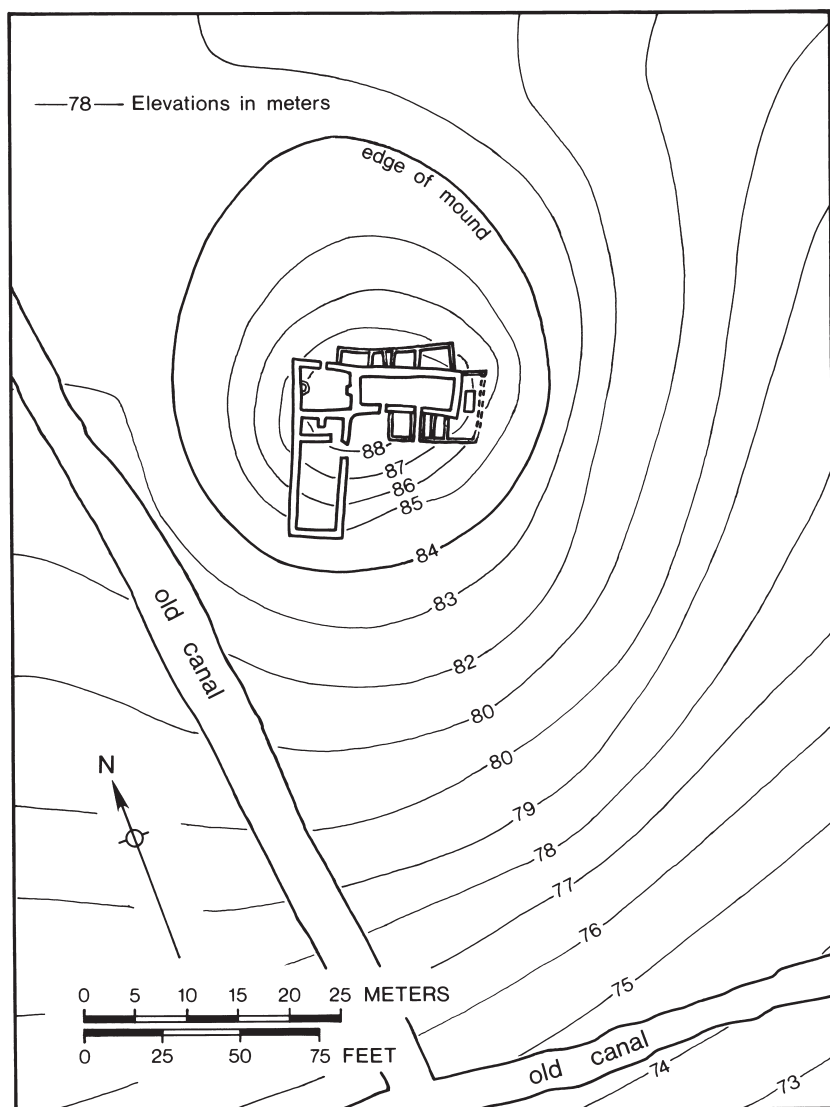




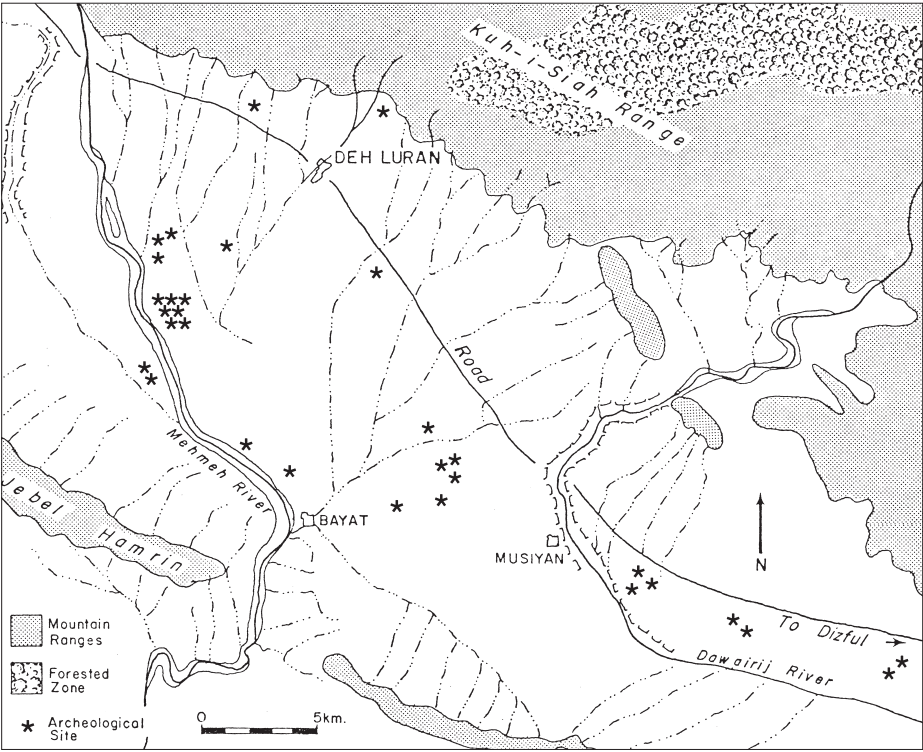
Pl. 13. Plan view of site DL-12. Founded during the Parthian Period with occupation into the 10<sup>th</sup> century, this large site is situated on the northwestern part of the alluvial plain.



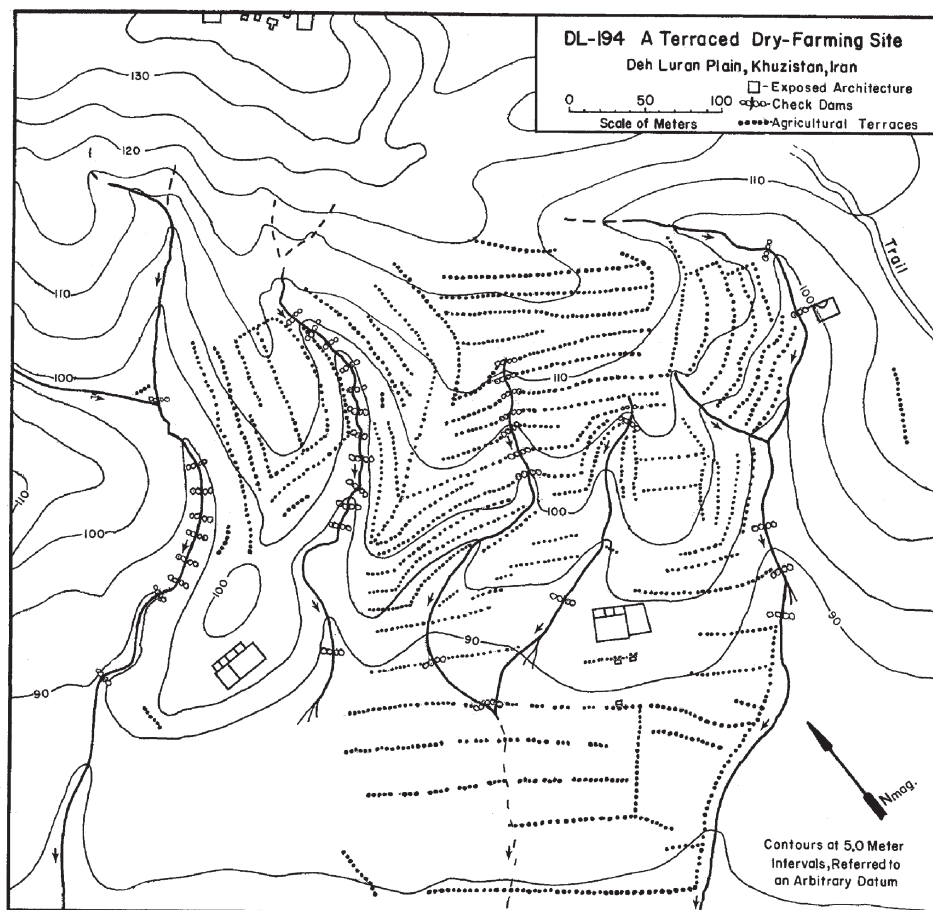
Pl. 14. Photograph of the remains of the Sasanian Period structure at site DL-241. This is an example of an irrigation agriculture homestead on the northwestern portion of the alluvial plain. Looking south-southeast (see Pl. 15).



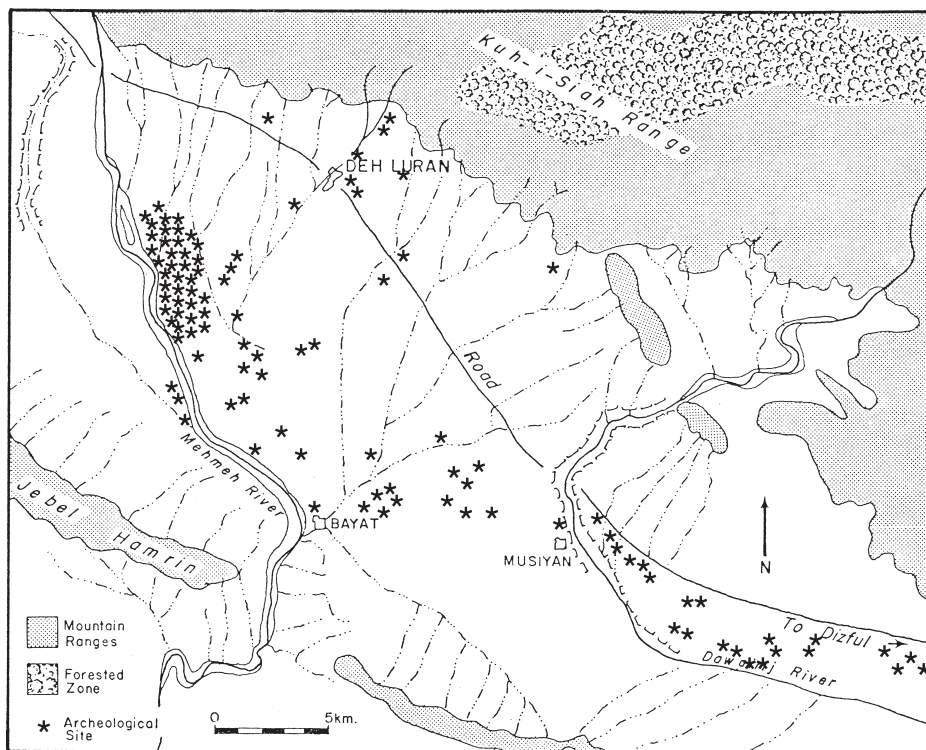
Pl. 15. Plan view of site DL-241, an irrigation agriculture homestead on the northwestern portion of the alluvial plain constructed during the Sasanian Period. The semi-circular feature abutting the wall of one of the larger rooms may be a hearth. The rectangular feature in the floor of the easternmost room may be a ceramic coffin. This site was situated atop a mound site dating to the Khazineh and Mehmeh Phases (5,000-4600 B.C.E.; Neely and Wright 1994: 140-141).



Pl. 16. Plan view of the Deh Luran Plain, with the distribution of dated sites for the Parthian Period (ca. 210 B.C.E. to 225 C.E.). Because of the small scale of this map, the site numbers have not been indicated.

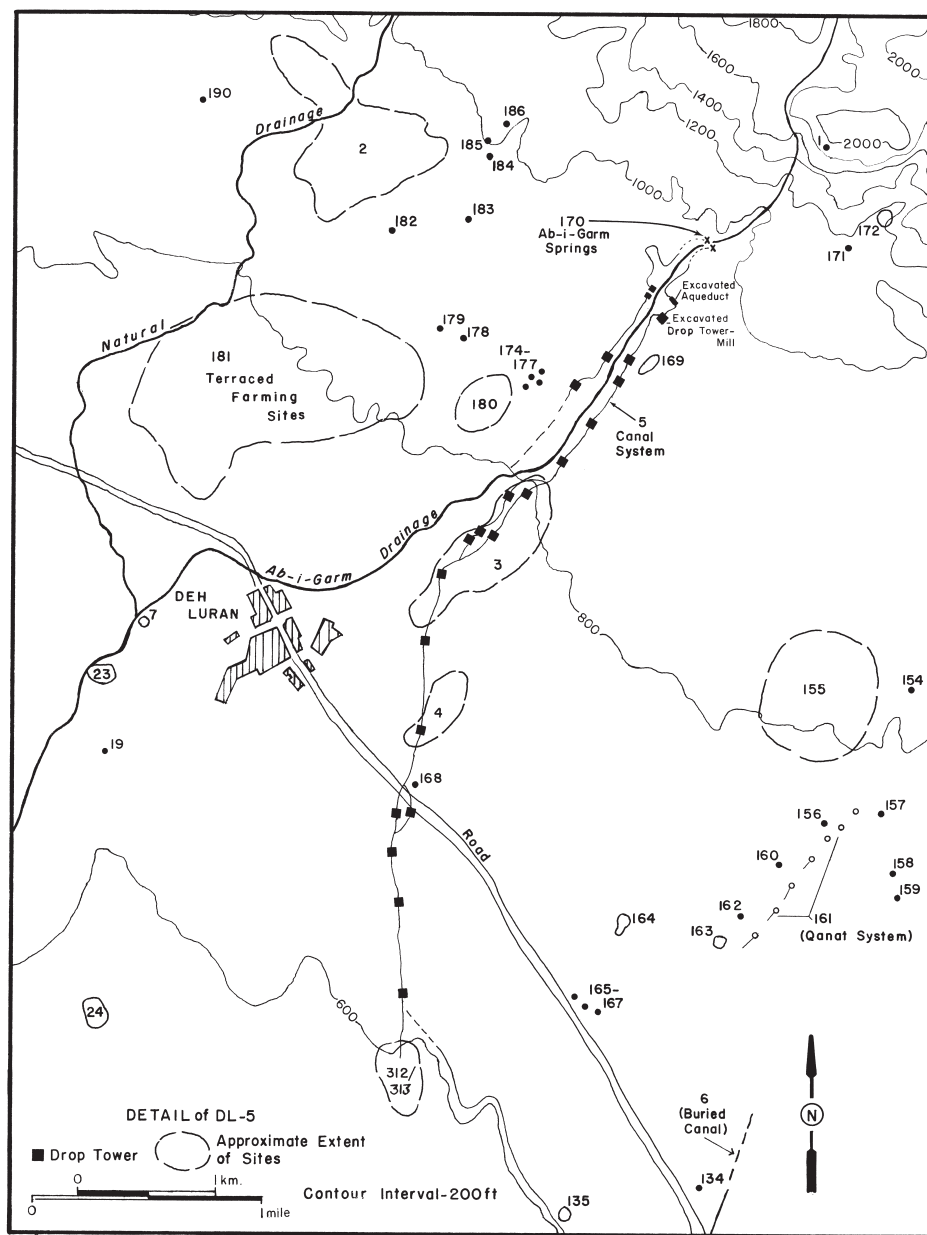


Pl. 17. Plan view of site DL-194, a dry-farming homestead on the northwest portion of the piedmont zone constructed during the Sasanian Period. Note the courtyard/compound homestead architecture. The structures shown at the northern extreme of this map form part of a likely associated hilltop site mentioned in the text.

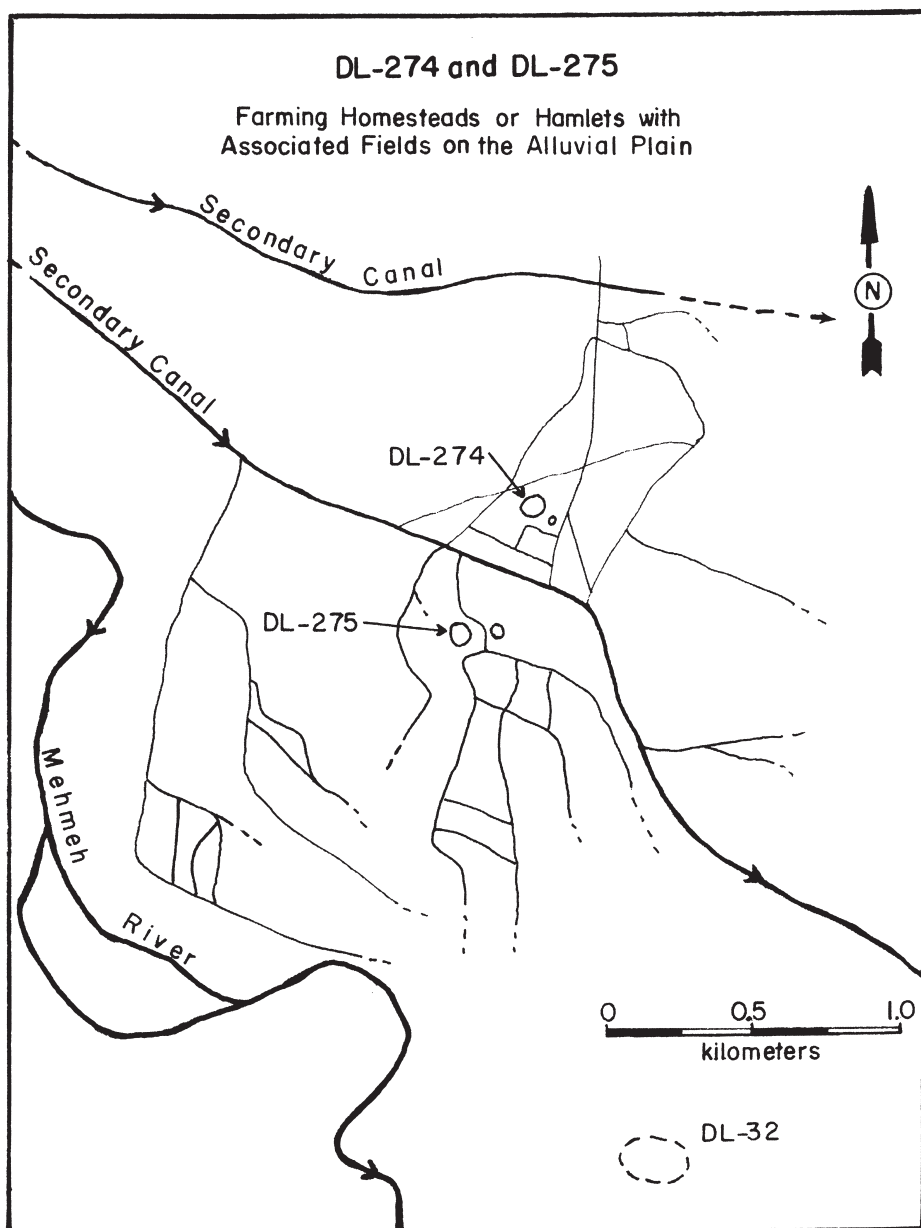


Pl. 18. Plan view of the Deh Luran Plain, with the distribution of dated sites for the Sasanian and the 7th Century Islamic periods (225 to ca. 700 C.E.). Because of the small scale of this map, the site numbers have not been indicated.





Pl. 19. Plan view detail map of the north-central portion of the Deh Luran Plain. Note the canal system (DL-5) with its drop-tower gristmills. See Pl. 24 for a rendering of an excavated drop-tower gristmill.



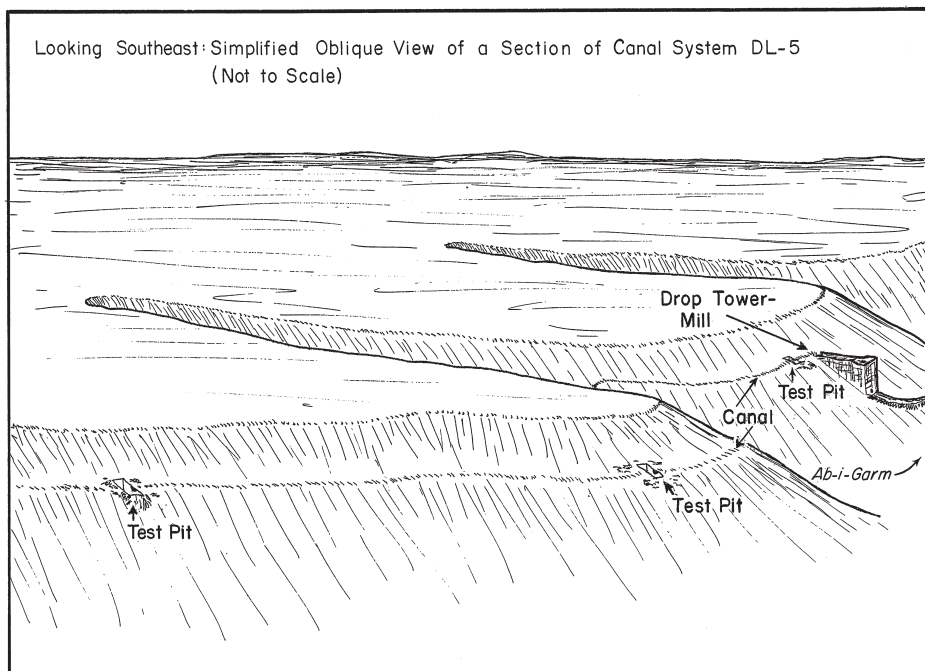
Pl. 20. Plan view of sites DL-274 and DL-275, irrigation agriculture homesteads on the southwestern margin of the alluvial plain constructed during the Sasanian Period. The fields and canals illustrated in are believed to be associated with the sites due to the presence of contemporaneous diagnostic ceramics.



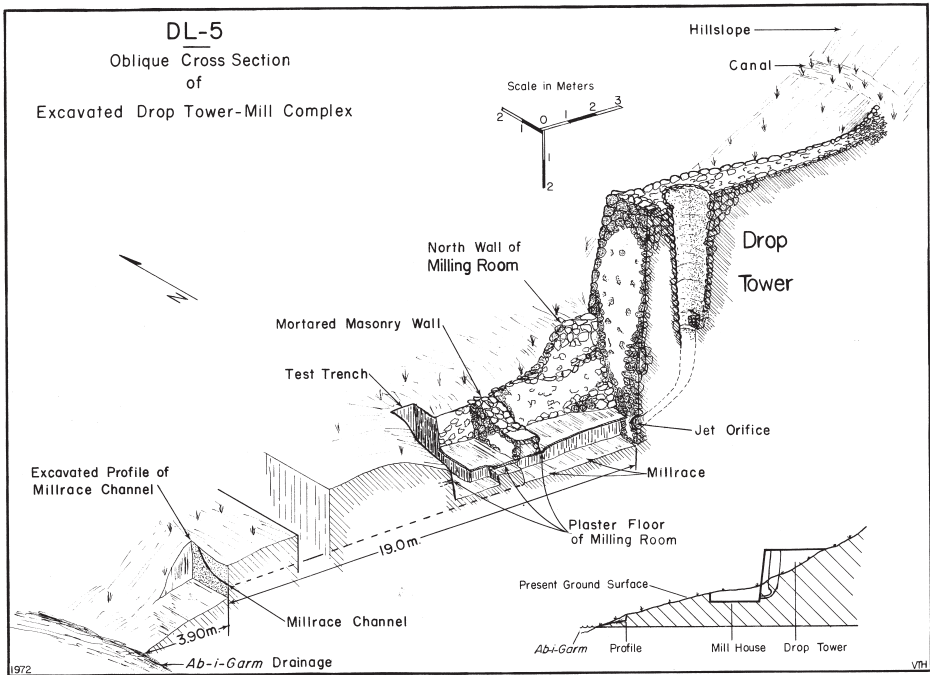
Pl. 21. Low dry-farming terraces located at the northwest corner of site DL-194 and bordering the drainage forming the site's western boundary (see Pl. 17). Looking northeast.



Pl. 22. Check-dams, or cross-channel terraces, located in the drainage forming the western boundary of site DL-194 (see Pl. 17). Looking northwest.



Pl. 23. A perspective drawing of a segment of canal system DL-5 near its point of origin. Lush grasses within a very shallow linear depression indicate the presence of the canal. The bed of the Ab-i Garm drainage lies in front and to the right of the drop-tower gristmill. Looking southeast.



Pl. 24. An oblique perspective cross-section drawing of an excavated drop-tower gristmill. This is one of several such gristmills forming an integral part of canal system DL-5 near its point of origin at the Ab-i Garm springs. See Pl. 19 for the location of this gristmill. Looking northeast.

## FUNERARY OBJECTS FROM A SASANIAN BURIAL JAR ON THE BUSHEHR PENINSULA

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**Abstract:** The discovery of Sasanian funerary remains on the Bushehr Peninsula was largely owing to the enthusiasm of the official British residents for ancient antiquities of Iran throughout the nineteenth century. Their antiquarian explorations resulted in the discovery of many burial jars which, according to their accounts, were mainly filled with disarticulated human bones and sand but which never contained any mortuary gifts. This paper discusses an exceptional case. In the early twentieth century a funerary jar containing a few objects was accidentally found by Lady Violet Dickson, the spouse of a British Political Agent in Persian Gulf. These objects are mostly diagnostic of the late Sasanian period and they offer us with a more precise chronology of this form of jar burial tradition on the Bushehr Peninsula.

**Keywords:** Bushehr Peninsula, burial, torpedo jar, funerary remains, mortuary gifts, Sasanian, Christianity

### Introduction

During a research visit to the British Museum in September 2012, I had the opportunity to access some photographs and sketches of Sasanian funerary objects retrieved from a burial jar<sup>1</sup> which was accidentally discovered by Lady Violet Dickson<sup>2</sup> and her husband on the Bushehr Peninsula in 1938. Soon after this discovery, Lady Dickson wrote a letter to Sidney Smith, then the Keeper of the Department of Egyptian & Assyrian Antiquities at the British Museum, informing him about her finds:

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<sup>1</sup> I am most grateful to Dr St J. Simpson for kindly offering me this unique evidence and encouraging me to publish it.

<sup>2</sup> Lady Dickson was the wife of Harold Dickson, a British Political Agent in the Middle East who also served in Iran during the early twentieth century. Harold Dickson was born in Beirut and spent his early life in Syria. He had a wonderful knowledge of Bedouin life and culture and wrote two monumental books: *"The Arab of the Desert"* and *"Kuwait & her neighbours"*.



“As I promised you this summer I am sending you three wax impressions of the seal, together with three sketches. The seal itself is I think an agate, resembling a bead with slightly less than half cut off and pierced through the centre. It is whitish in colour with a thicker white streak going across it, and blue-yellow on the flat side where the figure is engraved. This seal was found by my husband and myself when we dug out the contents of an ancient burial urn which had obviously been uncovered by sand-storms, the outer rim of which was visible to us when out riding on the present aerodrome at Bushire. There were no bones. A few very good teeth, and many cornelian beads, coral beads turned nearly white with age, a circular flat ring, an odd piece of broken blister pearl, also a similar cut stone to (a) in dark green but with no engraving on it” (Corres 1938, q.v. Dickson, dated 31 October).

A year later, in July 1939, the objects were dispatched to the British Museum for the identification and documentation, where they remained until the end of the Second World War in 1945. The photograph presented in this paper was made in the British Museum shortly before the objects were returned to Lady Dickson (Pl. 2). I saw the three wax impressions that she has mentioned in her letter, one in red and the other two in light amber colour (Pl. 3), at the British Museum. The whereabouts of the objects since Lady Dickson’s death in 1991 is unknown.

The discoveries of Sasanian ossuaries on Bushehr Peninsula began in the early nineteenth century, mostly by the official British residents and agents who served in the Persian Gulf. The process of these discoveries is broadly discussed by Dr. Simpson (Simpson 2007: 153-165, see also Simpson & Molleson 2014). These ossuaries were mainly “torpedo jars” (so-called because of their shape) or lidded limestone boxes. In the nineteenth century accounts, the jars were often described as long cylindrical vessels (ca. 0.70-1.00m length and ca. 0.20-0.22m width at its greatest girth) with a small opening (ca. 0.08 diameter) and a pointed base. The interiors of the jars were usually smeared with bitumen and the upper part was neatly cut, in order to ease placing the larger bones and crania inside, and secured with metal fasteners. In a more recently excavated cemetery of Shoghab, eight kilometers south-west of the city Bushehr, jars of much smaller scale were also used as bone container (Pl. 1) (see Mir Fattah 1996: 25-61 & Rahbar 1999).

In addition to jars, dead bodies on Bushehr were often placed into rectangular cists hewn into the natural bedrock. Skeletal remains in these cists do not indicate any sign of open body exposure and skeletons were all in anatomic order, often placed in extended position (Rahbar 1999: 20-25). Most of the mortuary gifts on Bushehr were recovered from these cists whereas jars and stone ossuaries that have yet come down to us are almost entirely without object (Rahbar 1999: 14)<sup>3</sup>. The absence of burial gifts in jars and stone receptacles has also been mentioned in accounts of the nineteenth century. According to Ouseley, the jars contained no object to indicate a date (Ouseley 1819: 220). The lack of mortuary gifts was also pointed out by a British lieutenant, William Bruce, who had discovered numerous burial jars at Rishahr (Erskine 1819: 191, see also Morier 1818: 45). It may therefore lead to the assumption that on the Bushehr Peninsula the deposition of gifts into burial jars or other types of receptacle was an exceptional tradition.

## The finds

### *The jar & partial human bones*

Whether or not the funerary urn was a typical Sasanian torpedo jar remains uncertain, since Lady Dickson did not describe the shape or measurements of the jar. Moreover, although she sent the objects to the British Museum, we do not know what happened to the jar or the partial bones found within. As she wrote, the jar contained no human bone but a “few very good teeth” that were most likely partial remains of a dead body after sub-aerial weathering (Molleson 2009: 1-16). Based on other nineteenth-century reports, all jars contained fragmented human bones that were extensively worn out in the course of open body exposure (see Johnson 1818: 20, Erskine 1819: 192 & 193 & Ouseley 1819: 220 & 221). The modification and disintegration process plausibly continued even after the bones had been placed in the jar due to repeated flooding and tropical condition of Bushehr Peninsula. It may explain the poor preservation of the bones in the jar described by Lady Dickson.

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<sup>3</sup> The objects that have been retrieved from the cists of Shoghab Cemetery consisted of beads (made of agate, cornelian, faience, etc.), bronze rings, a small cross, a clay spindle and a small bronze bell (Rahbar 1999: 26). Two Sasanian coins were also found in two other cists (Rahbar 1999: 45).

*The seal*

According to Lady Dickson's descriptions and sketch, the seal was hemispherical and pierced through the centre which is characteristic of the Sasanian seals. It is described as being made of white agate banded across the flat side with blue and yellow veining. The side view of a human figure standing to the right (in the impression) was engraved on the middle of the flat side. It represents a Christian worshipper holding a pole surmounted by an equal-armed Greek cross. He is wearing a long tunic and a cloak secured in front with a clasp, a quite common wearing for the Sasanian time (see Peck 1992). His cloth also recalls the Byzantine coins of the sixth century representing a figure with a similar cross in his hand. There is another cross behind him that looks like the other one but without a long staff. The seal is uninscribed (Pl. 3).

The representation of a worshipper with two crosses on the seal securely establishes its Christian affiliation. This scene has many parallels among Sasanian seals (see Lerner 1977: 9-10, see also Gyselen 2006: 59, fig. 76, 77, 78). One is a seal in Foroughi collection that bears the name "Jesus" written in Pahlavi script (Gyselen 2006: 47 fig. 21). On two other personal seals in the same collection the words "the servant of the Jesus" (Lerner 1977: 9-10, Pl. II/12, Gyselen 2006: 23 & 47, fig. 22) or "servant of our Lord" (Lerner 1977: 9-10, Pl. II/10, Gyselen 2006: 23) in Pahlavi also demonstrate Christian connections.

Both crosses are Greek types with arms of equal length. In Bastam signet rings engraved with Greek crosses were retrieved from both graves and settlements (Kroll 1972-75: 166; Kroll 1977-78: 179, Abb. 17/6). A small bronze Greek cross has also been recovered from a rock cut cist at Shoghab Cemetery on the Bushehr Peninsula (Rahbar 1999: 26). The presence of a cross in association with burial may put this hypothesis forward that the Christian community of Bushehr Peninsula also followed the Sasanian burial tradition. But, whether or not it was due to the rigid funerary code of the Sasanids largely remains open to debate.

*Cornelian beads*

Although cornelian beads are not particularly diagnostic in their own right, those that were found by Lady Dickson certainly date to the Sasanian period as they were associated with other objects of this period and their consistency of shape suggests contemporaneity rather than the recycling of

scavenged beads or heirloom pieces. Based on the only available picture, the jar contained a number of 115 plain cornelian beads (Pl. 2). In the Sasanian period cornelian was a very common material in manufacturing jewellery and seals. In Sasanian contexts cornelian was largely discovered at Babylon, Tell Mahuz, Nippur and Nuzi<sup>4</sup> in Mesopotamia (See Simpson 2003: 64), Shoghab Cemetery on the Bushehr Peninsula (Rahbar 1999: 26) and from a reused grave at Mehr War Kaboud in Luristan (Vanden Berghe 1970: 18, Haerinck & Overlaet 2010: 43, 44).

### *Coral beads*

A number of coral beads (around 18 beads) were recovered from the jar (Pl. 2 & 4). These beads were found either in Sasanian grave contexts at Tell Mohammed Arab in northern Iraq (Simpson 2003: 67 & 75) and Haftavan Tepe in Azerbaijan (Iran) (Burney 1970, Pl. VIIIb) or in settlements like at Kush in UAE and Merv in Turkmenistan (Simpson 2003: 67, see also Simpson 2004: 236). One single coral bead was found in association with a broken jar in Shoghab cemetery, but it remains a question whether or not it belonged to the burial jar (Rahbar 1999: 14).

### *A circular flat ring*

In the sketch caption the flat ring is described to be in mother of pearl. A flattened and smoothed side on the ring bears no motif (Pl. 2 & 4); despite this, I would rather consider this ring as a signet since it very much resembles the Sasanian signet rings. These rings were usually made of agate, cornelian and bronze but, to my knowledge, never in mother of pearl. Parallels of this ring were reported from Bastam (cornelian) (Kleiss, 1970: 51) and Qasr-e Abu-Nasr (Harper 1973: 40, Pl. 39-42, Whitcomb 1985: 178 & 179, see also Musche 1988: 306, Tafel CVII & CVIII).

## **Dating & Discussion**

Material culture in the Sasanian burial jar of Bushehr can be compared to the Sasanian period plain earth burials in Mesopotamia (Roaf 1984: 142-144, see also Simpson, 2003: 66 & Negro Ponzi 1970-71: 391-425),

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<sup>4</sup> According to Simpson cornelian beads were also reported from Yarim Tepe but the date is uncertain (see Simpson 2003: 64).

Haftavan Tepe (Burney 1970: 169) and possible Christian burials at Bastam in Azerbaijan (Kleiss 1970: 51). Most of the recovered objects from these burial sites can roughly be dated to the fourth and fifth centuries AD. The presence of Christian crosses in some of these burials suggests that some, if not all, of them belonged to the Christian communities. One should also bear in mind that the gift deposition in Zoroastrian funerary ritual was not a common tradition and yet no object has been reported from Sasanian bone receptacles.

We should also consider that the deposition of discarded human bones into a receptacle after sub-aerial weathering of the dead body is a late Sasanian period tradition of the 5<sup>th</sup> to late 7<sup>th</sup> centuries. This date is securely established through the recovered objects from the burial jar that I discussed in this paper. The most notable object among these is the seal which most likely belongs to the Christian community that were settled on Bushehr Peninsula. The representation of a priest on the seal mainly recalls the Byzantine coins of the sixth century. The earliest image of a standing figure holding a long staff surmounted by a cross introduced in 420 with a Victory during the reign of Anastasius I (491-518 AD). The Victory was later replaced by a male figure during the sixth century (Grierson 1982: 52). In the depictions of the late sixth century this figure is often illustrated with two crosses, one with a long staff in his right hand and another one with a short staff in his left hand (*Cf.* Grierson 1982, Pl. 1/5, 6, 8, Pl. 2/18-22, 24, 25 & Pl. 3/37-40).

Allegedly, other objects including coral beads and the flat ring suggest the same date. Coral is indicative of the Sasanian period and, as Simpson points out, it was a typical Roman product imported to Iran from the Mediterranean and Red Sea during the 4th and 5th century AD (Simpson 2003: 67, Simpson 2004: 236, see also A'lam 1993: 267). This date is also compatible with a coin, of presumably Khosrow I (531-579 AD), from a rock-cut cist at Shoghab Cemetery<sup>5</sup>.

We know that the rise of Christianity in Iran and particularly in Fars province approximately began during the third century. Although, at the beginning Christianity was severely opposed by Shapur II (309-379 AD), it finally succeeded to get the recognition of the Sasanids and to constitute its Catholicos Church in Ctesiphon (Daryaei 2009: 78). In the fifth century

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<sup>5</sup> I am most grateful to Mr. Mehdi Rahbar and Mr. Sadjad Alibaigi for kindly offering this insight.

the bishopric of Pars separated from the Nestorian patriarch of Ctesiphon, and Rew Ardashir (Bushehr)<sup>6</sup> developed into the formal seat of the metropolitan of the Nestorian church in Persia (Asmussen 1983: 932, see also Russel 1991). Finally, in the mid-7<sup>th</sup> century Rew Ardashir became the metropolitan of dioceses (Miri 2012: 118). Therefore, the sixth century may safely be used as a *terminus post quem* for this seal and eventually for the burial. This date could cautiously be used for other jar burials, also including torpedo jars, on the Bushehr Peninsula.

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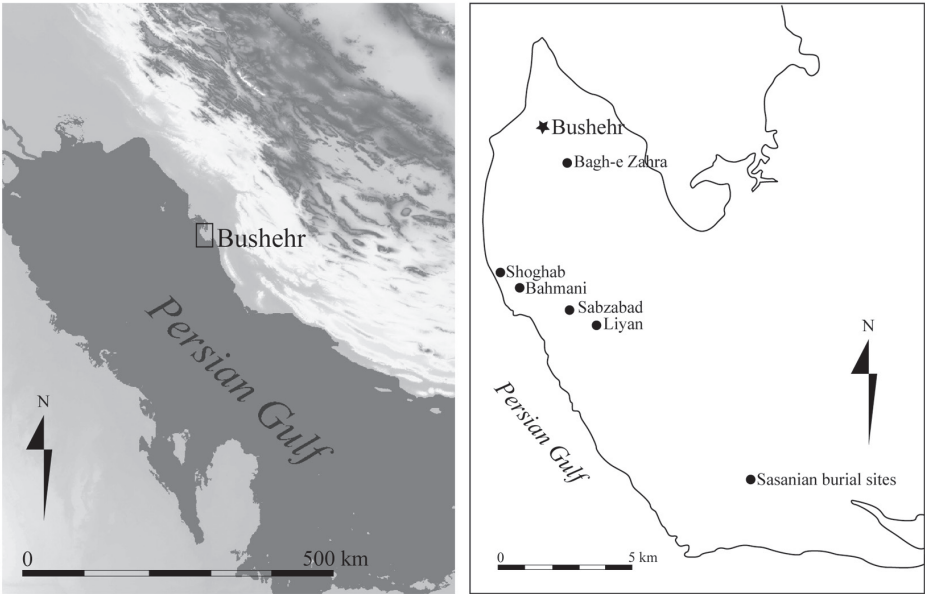
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<sup>6</sup> It might worth to mention here that the location of Rew Ardashir is still a matter of controversy, but the consensus identifies it with the Bushehr Peninsula (Whitehouse & Williamson 1973: 42 & 43, see also Miri 2012: 68 & 69).



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Pl. 1. Bushehr peninsula & Sasanian burial sites.

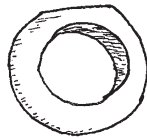


Pl. 2. The recovered objects from burial jar (Photo from archive of the British Museum).



Pl. 3. Left: The impression of the seal (Photo from archive of the British Museum),  
Right: reproduced image of a worshipper on the seal.

(a.) Seal. Three views. (Nat. size.)



(b.) Ring in Mother of pearl. Coral beads.

Seal, beads and ring from Bushire, S. Iran.

Pl. 4. Sketches made by Lady Dickson (Photo from archive of the British Museum).

## HORMEZD II., KÖNIG DER KÖNIGE VON ĒRĀN UND ANĒRĀN

BY

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**Abstract:** Hormezd II succeeded his father King Narseh (293-302) on the throne of the New Persian Empire that had been founded by Ardašīr I. He was the eighth *šāhān šāh* and reigned for seven years and five months between 303 and 309/10 AD. As son of a former viceroy, Hormezd should not have expected to ever ascend the throne of the Sasanian Empire. His early years were marked by serious political events that threatened the internal stability of the empire. The disputes over the succession of Wahrām II, which his father, when prompted by an aristocratic party, was actively involved in, can be seen as a turning point in Hormezd's life. They were followed by the enthronement of his father Narseh (293) and, by that, Hormezd's rise to the position of crown prince of the kingdom. A bitter experience for him was the Roman-Persian War (297-298) that was brought to an end by the ignominious peace-treaty of Nisibis. As for the years of Hormezd's rule, only few events are based on reliable sources. Domestically, the simmering conflict between the nobility and the monarch is likely to have been resurged. In the realm of foreign policy, there was no deterioration of Roman-Sasanian relations. Hormezd II's allegedly undertaken campaign against the Roman Empire cannot be confirmed by reliable information. The genealogy of the supposedly eight sons and one daughter remains controversial in scholarship due to conflicting sources.

**Keywords:** Iran, Sasanians, Narseh, Hormezd II.

Als König Narseh<sup>1</sup> nach neunjähriger Regierungszeit (293-302) hoch betagt<sup>2</sup> stirbt, folgt ihm sein Sohn Hormezd II.<sup>3</sup> auf den Thron des

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<sup>1</sup> U. Weber, Narseh, König der Könige von Ērān und Anērān, in *IrAnt* 47(2012) 153-302.

<sup>2</sup> Nach dem Zeugnis der arabischsprachigen *Histoire Nestorienne* (*Chronique de Séert*) in *Patrologia Orientalis* IV,3(1908[1971]) 254f. ist anzunehmen, dass Narseh den Quellen (ŠKZ aus dem Jahre 262) entsprechend im fortgeschrittenen Alter von ca. 60-65 Jahren gekrönt wurde: „C'était un vieillard intelligent et sage...“

<sup>3</sup> Agathias IV 25,1. - Da Ohrmezd II. in der wissenschaftlichen Literatur vornehmlich als Hormezd II. bekannt ist, wird er unter dieser Namensform auch in diesem Aufsatz so genannt.

Sāsānidenreiches. Er regierte sieben Jahre und fünf Monate in der Zeit von 302-309/10 n. Chr. Hormezd II. war der achte šāhān šāh des von Ardašīr I. gegründeten neupersischen Reiches.

### **Genealogie Hormezds II.**

Drei Primärquellen für die Genealogie Hormezds II. lassen sich nachweisen: es sind dies die einsprachigen mittelpersischen Inschriften seines Sohnes, Šābuhrs II. (309-379) [ŠTBn-I], und seines Enkels, Šābuhrs III. (383-388) [ŠTBn-II], aus Tāq-i Bustān, ferner ein Siegelabdruck Šābuhrs II. aus der Sammlung A. Saeedis, den R. Gyselen veröffentlicht hat. Aus diesen Quellen geht eindeutig hervor, dass Hormezd II. ein Sohn König Narsehs war.

Dagegen kann die in der Inschrift des Sakenkönigs Šābuhr aus Persepolis genannte Majestät Hormezd entgegen früheren<sup>4</sup> Erkenntnissen wohl nicht als Hormezd II., sondern eher als Hormezd I. gedeutet werden<sup>5</sup>. M. Azarnoush<sup>6</sup> bezweifelte, dass der Sakenkönig Šābuhr ein Bruder Šābuhrs II. sein könnte, da drei seiner bekannt gewordenen Brüder entweder abgesetzt, ins Gefängnis geworfen<sup>7</sup> oder geblendet worden waren. Von daher ist es fragwürdig, warum gerade dieser angebliche Bruder, der im zweiten Regierungsjahr Šābuhrs II., als dieser noch ein Kleinkind war, ein bedeutendes Amt bekleidete, also zwangsläufig älter sein musste, nicht ebenfalls von der Thronfolge ausgeschlossen war wie die anderen Brüder: Der Meinung M. Azarnoush' schloss sich N. Schindel an<sup>8</sup>. Überraschenderweise erwähnt nur ein einziger Vertreter der sekundären Tradition, der byzantinische Historiker Agathias, Hormezds II. Genealogie, die mit den Angaben der Primärquellen übereinstimmt<sup>9</sup>. Nach seiner eigenen Aussage,

<sup>4</sup> M. Azarnoush, Šāpūr, Ardašīr II, and Šāpūr III: another Perspective, in AMI n. F. 19(1986) 219-247; hier 223 Anm. 27.

<sup>5</sup> M. Back, Die sassanidischen Staatsinschriften (1978) 492-494. – Im Folgenden als SSI abgekürzt zitiert.

<sup>6</sup> M. Azarnoush, *ibid.* 223-225; 228: „Only 37 or 38 years, consequently, separated the end of Hormozd I's reign from the date of the inscription Persepolis I“. – 229.

<sup>7</sup> K. Mosig-Walburg, Die Flucht des persischen Prinzen Hormizd und sein Exil im Römischen Reich – Eine Untersuchung der Quellen, in IrAnt 35(2000) 69-109.

<sup>8</sup> N. Schindel, Shapur II. – Kawad I./2. Regierung. Wien (2004) 240. (Sylloge Nummorum Sasanidarum Paris – Berlin – Wien, Band III,1). – Im Folgenden als SNS abgekürzt zitiert.

<sup>9</sup> Agathias IV 25,1.



so betont Agathias, habe er durch den Übersetzer Sergius<sup>10</sup> Kenntnis von den persischen Reichsannalen gehabt. Auch in der Tradition der zahlreichen tertiären Quellen tritt Hormezd stets als Sohn König Narsehs auf<sup>11</sup>.

Hormezds II. Geburtsjahr dürfte erst nach 262, als die Šābuhr-Inschrift gesetzt wurde, zu datieren sein. Aus den Angaben dieser Inschrift ist zu erfahren, dass die Tochter Ohrmezd(duxtag)<sup>12</sup> zu diesem Zeitpunkt noch das einzige Kind des damaligen Sakenkönigs Narseh war, das vermutlich wegen seiner hohen adligen Abstammung mütterlicherseits berechtigt war, zum Kreis der neun Enkel und Enkelinnen Šābuhrs I. zu gehören. Etwa 40 Jahre vor seiner Krönung zum König des Sāsānidenreiches im Jahre 302 war der spätere Hormezd II. wohl noch nicht geboren.

### Name Hormezds II.

König Narseh wird für seinen Sohn den Namen Ohrmezd wohl mit Bedacht ausgewählt haben: Der Gottesname Ohrmezd, altpers. Ahura-Mazdā, verweist auf den höchsten Gott im Zarathustrismus, der nach dem Zeugnis der sāsānidischen Investiturreliefs den Ring der Herrschaft überreicht. Mit dieser Namensgebung wollte Narseh wohl außerdem das Andenken an Hormezd I.<sup>13</sup>, an seinen Bruder, den dritten Großkönig des Reiches (270/72-273), wachhalten. Des weiteren darf man annehmen, dass

<sup>10</sup> Agathias IV 30,3-4 s. A. Cameron, Agathias on the Sassanians (1969/70) 135 (3): "When Sergius the interpreter went there he asked the officials in charge of the Royal Annals to give him access to the records (for I had often urged him to do this)... (4): So Sergius extracted the names, the chronology, and the most important happenings in their time, and translated all this most skillfully into Greek (for he was the best interpreter, admired by Chosroes himself...". – PLRE III Sergius 9. – M. Heil, Perser im spätrömischen Dienst (2006) 143-179; hier 175.

<sup>11</sup> Bar Hebraeus, Chronicon Syriacum S. 58,18-19 [Text], S. 57 [58][Übers.]. – Elias von Nisibis 97,14-19. – N. A. Pedersen, A Manichaean Historical Text, in ZPE 119(1997) 193-201; hier Pl. 100,20-21. – Histoire Nestorienne (Chronique de Séert) 254f. – Abū 'l-Fidā' 82-83; 84-86. – ad-Dīnawarī 47,11-12. – Eutychius von Alexandria 113,22-114,2; 114,20. – Ḥamza al-İṣfahānī 51,13-19. – al-Ḥwārazmī 102,11. – Ibn al-Aṭīr 391,8-392,5. – Ibn Qutaiba 655,15-18. – al-Maqdisī 159,13-14; 160,1-4. – al-Mas'ūdī, Les prairies d'or 295,3-8; 10-11. – al-Mas'ūdī, Kitāb at-tanbīh wa 'l-İshrāf 100,19-20. – at-Tabarī 835,16-836,6. – at-Ta'ālībī 510-512. – al-Ya'qūbī 182,14-16. – al-Bīrūnī 121,10; 123,14; 125,14; 127,10. – al-Bal'amī II 90-91. – Mīrḥwānd 303-305. – al-Firdausī V 421-423.

<sup>12</sup> Ph. Huyse, Die dreisprachige Inschrift Šābuhrs I. an der Ka'ba-i Zardušt (ŠKZ) I(1999) 51f. = § 38. – Im Folgenden als ŠKZ abgekürzt zitiert.

<sup>13</sup> U. Weber, Hormezd I., König der Könige von Ērān und Anērān, in IrAnt 42(2007) 387-418.

Narseh nach dem Intermezzo der drei Wahrām-Könige (273-293) an einen der Herrscher der ursprünglichen Königsfamilie anknüpfen und die Fortsetzung seines dynastischen Anspruchs hervorheben<sup>14</sup> wollte.

Sein Name ist in den Quellen auf unterschiedliche Weise überliefert. In den Primärquellen, den beiden Inschriften Šābuhrs II. und Šābuhrs III. aus Tāq-i Bustān, tritt er unter dem Namen Hormizd<sup>15</sup> auf, die Siegelinschrift nennt ihn dagegen Ohrmazd<sup>16</sup>. Auf den Münzen finden sich folgende Schreibungen seines Namens: *hwrmsdy*, *'whrmsdy*, *'hwrmsdy* und *'whlmsdy*. M. Alram zufolge überwiegen die Versionen *hwrmsdy* und *'whrmsdy*<sup>17</sup>.

Allein drei Autoren der sekundären Tradition, die byzantinischen Historiker Agathias, Theophanes und Synkellos, erwähnen Hormezd II. unter der gräzisierten Namensform Ὅρμισδάτης bzw. Ὅρμίσδας<sup>18</sup>. In den übrigen Zeugnissen verändert sich sein Name entsprechend der jeweiligen Sprache<sup>19</sup>.

<sup>14</sup> Vgl. die Namensgebung der drei Nachfolger Hormezds I.: Wahrām I. bis Wahrām III.; sie gründet sich auf dem Willen, auch durch den Thronnamen zum Ausdruck zu bringen, dass mit der Familie Wahrāms I. ein anderer Zweig der Königsfamilie an die Macht gekommen ist. Der nächste Herrscher, der denselben Thronnamen führt, ist erst Wahrām IV. (388-399 n.Chr.) am Ende des 4. Jahrhunderts n. Chr. – Bestätigt wird diese Annahme durch Narsehs „damnatio memoriae“ am Relief Wahrāms I., den er als Usurpator ansah. Dabei ersetzte Narseh den Namen Wahrāms I. durch seinen eigenen, beanspruchte dadurch das Investiturrelief für sich und brachte damit zum Ausdruck, rechtmäßiger Thronfolger zu sein. – s. dazu M. Sprengling, Shahpuhr I, the Great on the Kaabah of Zoroaster (KZ) (1940) 384. – U. Weber, Wahrām I., König der Könige von Ērān und Anērān (273-276), in Festschrift für Erich Kettenhofen (2008) 171-221.

<sup>15</sup> M. Back, SSI (1978) 490f.

<sup>16</sup> R. Gyselen, Shapur, fils d'Ohrmazd, petit-fils de Narseh (2007) 73-80; hier 77: (mazdēsn bay) šahpuhr šāhān šāh [ērān] (ud anērān kē čīhr az yazdān) pus [mazdēsn] bay Ohrmazd [šāhān šāh ērān] ud anērān kē čīhr az yazdān nab bay Narseh šā(hān šāh). – „le mazdéen, le seigneur Shāpur, roi des rois des iraniens et non-iraniens dont l'apparence (vient) des dieux, fils du mazdéen, le seigneur Ohrmazd, roi des rois des iraniens et non-iraniens dont l'apparence (est celle) des dieux, petit-fils du seigneur Narseh roi \*des rois ».

<sup>17</sup> M. Alram, Ohrmazd II. (302/3-309/10), in M. Alram/R. Gyselen, SNS II(2012) 361. – Offensichtlich ist die Schreibung mit h am Anfang des Namens die jüngere Form, die sich dann auch im Neupersischen durchgesetzt hat, worauf mich E. Kettenhofen freundlicherweise hinwies [s. H. F. J. Junker/B. Alavi, Wörterbuch Persisch-Deutsch (31977) 846].

<sup>18</sup> Agathias IV 25,1: Ὅρμισδάτης. – Theophanes I 8,20: Ὅρμίσδας. – Synkellos 441,11: Ὅρμίσδας.

<sup>19</sup> **mp.** '2h2mzdy s. ŠTBn-I; ŠTBn-II: M. Back, SSI (1978) 490f. – 'whrm(zdy) = Ohrmazd s. Anm. 17. – **gr.** Ὅρμισδάτης s. Agathias IV 25,1; A. Cameron, ibid. S. 122. – Ὅρμίσδας s. Theophanes I 8,20. – Synkellos 441,11. – **hebr.** Hōrmiz s. Der Babylonische Talmud III(1933) 500,5-6; VI(1933) 946,12; 960,12-13; VIII(1933) 389,7-8;

## Kronprinz

Über die Zeit vor Hormezds Krönung zum šāhān šāh des Sāsānidenreiches geben die wenigen Quellen keine Auskunft. Ebenfalls unbekannt ist die Existenz von weiteren Thronprätendenten. In seiner Jugend dürfte Hormezd als Sohn Narsehs, des einstigen Vizekönigs von Hind(estān), Sagestān und Tūrān, und später des König von Armenien, nicht damit gerechnet haben, jemals den Thron des Sāsānidenreiches zu besteigen. Es ist zu fragen, welche Ereignisse Hormezds Aufstieg förderten. Zum besseren Verständnis ist es daher unerlässlich, auf die politische Karriere seines Vaters Narseh einzugehen, ohne die Hormezds II. Aufstieg zum Großkönig nicht denkbar wäre<sup>20</sup>.

Nach dem Zeugnis der Šābuhr-Inschrift (262) waren drei Söhne Šābuhrs I. für die Thronfolge des Reiches prädestiniert: Hormezd [I.], Großkönig von Armenien, Šābuhr, König von Mēšān, und Narseh, König von Hind(estān), Sagestān und Tūrān bis ans Meeresufer<sup>21</sup>. Auf Šābuhr I. folgte sein Sohn Hormezd I. (270/72-273), der sich durch seinen Titel wuzurg šāh Arminān (Großkönig der Armenier) unter seinen Brüdern als Thronfolger auszeichnete<sup>22</sup>. Als dieser nach einjähriger Herrschaft starb, übernahm wider Erwarten nicht Narseh, sondern der von Šābuhr I.

IX(1935) 766,17-18. – **sy.** Hōrmīzd s. Bar Hebraeus, *Chronicon Syriacum* 58,18-19. – Die Chronik von Arbela 45,9-15 [Text]; 67,6-11 [Übers.]. – Hōrmīzd s. O. Braun, *Ausgewählte Akten persischer Märtyrer* II,4; III,2. – Hurmīzd s. Elias von Nisibis I 97,14-19 [Text], 47,25-29 [Übers.]. – **kopt.** Hormīzd s. N. A. Pedersen, *A Manichaean Historical Text*, in ZPE 119(1997) 193-201; hier Pl. 100,20. – **arab.** Hurmuz s. *Histoire Nestorienne* I 255,1-3; 257,10; 287,9-288,1. – Abū 'l-Fidā' 82-83. – Hurmuzdagān s. *ad-Dīnawarī* 49,11ff. – Hurmuz s. *Eutychius von Alexandria* I 114,1; 114,10-14. – *Ḥamza al-İṣḫānī* I 51,13-19 [Text], II 37,21-27 [lat. Übers.]; engl. Übers.: *The Annals of Ḥamza al-İṣḫānī*, Transl. from Arabic by U. M. Daudpota, in *Journal of the K. R. Cama Oriental Institute* 22(1932) 98. – *al-Ḥwārazmī* 102,11. – *Ibn al-Aṭīr* 1,391,8-392,1-4. – *Ibn Qutaiba* 655,15-18. – *al-Maqdisī* III 159,13-14 [Text], 163,12 [Übers.]. – *al-Mas'ūdī*, *Les prairies d'or* I 295,3-8 (§ 600) [Text], I 224,13-18 [Übers.]; *al-Mas'ūdī*, *Kitāb at-tanbīh wa 'l-İshrāf* 100,19-20. – *aṭ-Ṭabarī* I 835,17-836,6 [Text], 49-50 [engl. Übers.]. – *aṭ-Ta'ālībī* 510-512. – *al-Ya'qūbī* 182,14-16. – *al-Bīrūnī* 121; 123; 125; 127. – **np.** *Bal'amī* II 90-91. – *Mīrḥwānd* 304f. – *Firdausī* V 421-423.

<sup>20</sup> s. U. Weber, Narseh, König der Könige von Ērān und Anērān, in *IrAnt* 47(2012) 157-160.

<sup>21</sup> Ph. Huyse, *ŠKZ* I(1999) 46f. § 33-34.

<sup>22</sup> Agathangelos, *History of the Armenians* (1976) 35 (18): "So after the sad news of his death reached Khosrov king of the Armenians – who was second in the kingdom of the Persian, for whoever was king of Armenia had second rank in the Persian kingdom – ...". – Ph. Huyse, *ŠKZ* 2(1999) 109 Anm. 180.

in seiner Inschrift deutlich zurückgesetzte Sohn Wahrām [I.], König von Gēlān (273-276), die Königsherrschaft im Sāsānidenreich. Seine Stellung innerhalb der Königsfamilie bleibt in der wissenschaftlichen Diskussion weiterhin umstritten. Desungeachtet dürfte Wahrām nach Aussage der Šābuhr-Inschrift durch vier Maßnahmen seines Vaters für die Thronfolge nicht vorgesehen gewesen sein: Wahrām gehörte protokollarisch gesehen nicht zu den drei privilegierten Söhnen, ferner musste er auf die Anrede „Unser Sohn“ verzichten, wurde des weiteren auch nicht mit einer Feuerstiftung geehrt, die Šābuhr I. nur für sich selbst, für seine Tochter und für drei seiner bevorzugten Söhne vorgesehen hatte. Außerdem musste sich Wahrām von Gēlān mit dem 11. protokollarischen Rang zufrieden geben, während die anderen bevorzugten Söhne auf den Rängen 2-4 platziert waren. Von daher dürfte Wahrām protokollarisch aus dem engeren Kreis der Königsfamilie ausgeschlossen worden sein. Offensichtlich gehörte er zu den Mitgliedern der erweiterten Königsfamilie, denen Šābuhr I. die Vergünstigung nur eines täglichen Opfers zukommen ließ. Ungeachtet dieser Zurücksetzung tritt Wahrām bei der zweiten Erwähnung der Nachkommen Šābuhrs I. — hier entsprechend ihrem Alter<sup>23</sup> — als ältester Sohn auf, gefolgt von König Šābuhr von Mēšān, Großkönig Ohrmezd-Ardašīr von Armenien und König Narseh von Sagestān. Dass sich Wahrām I. in seiner eigenen Inschrift auf seinem Felsrelief von Bīšābuhr aber als Sohn Šābuhrs I. und Enkel Ardašīrs I.<sup>24</sup> bezeichnet, ist aufschlussreich.

Beim Herrschaftswechsel von Hormezd I. zu Wahrām I. waren offensichtlich Hormezdag<sup>25</sup>, Sohn Hormezds I., und Wahrāms [I.] Bruder Narseh in der Thronfolge übergangen worden. Es verwundert daher nicht, daß Narseh Wahrām I. als Usurpator ansah. Narsehs „*damnatio memoriae*“ an der Inschrift<sup>26</sup> seines (Halb)Bruders Wahrām im Jahre 293 kann dafür als Beweis gelten. Von daher dürfte feststehen, dass Narseh sich in der Thronfolge übergangen fühlte und durch die Verfälschung der Inschrift nicht nur seinen Bruder, sondern auch dessen Nachkommen der „*damnatio memoriae*“ anheimgeben wollte.

<sup>23</sup> Ph. Huyse, ŠKZ I(1999) 50 = § 36.

<sup>24</sup> D. N. MacKenzie, 2. The Inscription, in: G. Herrmann, The Sasanian Rock Reliefs at Bishapur, Part 2(1981) 14-17; hier 17: “son of the Mazda-worshipping god Shapur, king of kings of Eran and Non-Eran... grandson of the god Ardashir, king of kings”.

<sup>25</sup> Ph. Huyse, ŠKZ I(1999) 51 = § 38: und Hormezdag, dem Sohn des Königs der Armenier.

<sup>26</sup> D. N. MacKenzie, *ibid.* (1981) 14-17.

Es bleibt zu fragen, wer das vakante Vizekönigtum von Armenien nach der Krönung Hormezds I. regierte. Überraschenderweise erwähnt die Pāikūlī-Inschrift im Jahre 293 Narseh nicht als König von Hind(estān), Sagestān und Tūrān, sondern als König von Armenien, aber nicht als Großkönig von Armenien, wie man es hätte erwarten können<sup>27</sup>. In welchem Jahr Narsehs Königsherrschaft in Armenien begann, ist nicht bekannt. Man kann aber davon ausgehen, dass Narseh vielleicht schon nach Hormezds I. Krönung (270/72) oder spätestens nach dessen Tod 273 als sein Nachfolger zum Vizekönig von Armenien aufstieg. Aller Wahrscheinlichkeit nach dürfte Wahrām I. seinen (Halb)Bruder Narseh aber als Entschädigung für fehlgeschlagene Thronansprüche zum Vizekönig von Armenien ernannt haben<sup>28</sup>. Nach Aussage der Pāikūlī-Inschrift kommt es zwanzig Jahre später zu einem schwerwiegenden Konflikt um die Thronfolge Wahrāms II., der die Adelspartei entzweite und in einen Krieg auszuarten drohte. Ausgangspunkt für diesen Konflikt war die heimlich vorgenommene Krönung Wahrāms III. ohne Zustimmung des Adels. In dieser Krisensituation ergreift ein Teil des Adels die Initiative und fordert Narseh wiederholt auf, den Thron der Ahnen zu besteigen. Nach kurzen Auseinandersetzungen um die Thronfolge, nach der Abdankung Wahrāms III.<sup>29</sup> und der Wahl Narsehs zum König des Sāsānidenreiches folgte seine Thronerhebung. Danach dürfte Hormezds Ernennung zum Kronprinzen nichts mehr im Wege gestanden haben.

Es ist davon auszugehen, dass Hormezd die vorangehenden ca. zwanzig bis dreißig Jahre im Vizekönigtum seines Vaters Narseh in Armenien verbracht hat. Über seinen Werdegang oder über politische Ämter liegen keine Nachrichten vor. Es ist jedoch kaum denkbar, dass Hormezd wegen der Vorbehalte, die zwischen Narseh und der Wahrām-Familie bestanden, in diesen Jahren als Vizekönig des Reiches eingesetzt worden sein könnte.

Hormezds Jahre als Kronprinz (293-302) waren geprägt durch gravierende Ereignisse, die die innere Stabilität des Reiches gefährdeten: noch kurz vor seiner Ernennung zum Kronprinzen erlebte er die Auseinandersetzungen um die Thronfolge Wahrāms II. Es darf angenommen

<sup>27</sup> Zur Herabstufung dieses Titels s. E. Kettenhofen, Tirdād und die Inschrift von Pāikūlī (1995) 44f. – U. Weber, Narseh, König der Könige, *ibid.* (2012) 171-173.

<sup>28</sup> s. ausführlich: U. Weber, Narseh, König der Könige, *ibid.* (2012) 170-173.

<sup>29</sup> U. Weber, Wahrām III., König der Könige von Ērān und Anērān, in *IrAnt* 45(2010) 353-394.

werden, dass Kronprinz Hormezd einige Jahre später aktiv am römisch-persischen Krieg (297-298) teilgenommen hat, der in einer verheerenden Niederlage endete und König Narseh dazu zwang, einem schmachvollen Friedensvertrag zuzustimmen<sup>30</sup>. Ob man Hormezds Beteiligung an diesem Krieg mit seiner Darstellung als ein Mann „in reifem Alter“<sup>31</sup> auf dem einzigen Felsrelief seines Vaters (s. u.) in Verbindung bringen kann, muß offen bleiben. Ebenfalls im Ungewissen bleibt die Frage, ob Hormezd zusammen mit Narsehs Frauen, Kindern und einer großen Anzahl von Adligen und hohen Würdenträgern des Hofes nach der Vernichtung des persischen Heeres in römische Gefangenschaft geriet<sup>32</sup>. Wenn es sich so verhalten hätte, könnte Diokletian einen noch größeren Triumph in Händen gehalten haben, um einen für Rom günstigeren Friedensvertrag auszuhandeln.

Die einzige Darstellung Hormezds als Kronprinz (Fig. 1a und 1b) ist auf dem bekannten Felsrelief König Narsehs von Naqš-i Rostam (8)(VI), das bislang als Investiturrelief, von mir aber als Herrschaftsbild<sup>33</sup>, gedeutet wurde, zu sehen<sup>34</sup>.

Eine eindeutige Zuweisung des Kronprinzen Hormezd an die beiden in Frage kommenden Figuren, an die kleine Figur zwischen König Narseh und Königin Šābuhrduxtag<sup>35</sup> oder an die große Figur hinter Narseh, kann

<sup>30</sup> J. Wiesehöfer, *l-ytlb t'r 'byh*. Hormizd II. und Rom (1989) 68-71; hier 71. - Dagegen A. Sh. Shahbazi, Hormozd II, in *EncIr* XII,5(2012) 464-465.

<sup>31</sup> J. Wiesehöfer, *ibid.* (1989) 71.

<sup>32</sup> U. Weber, Narseh, König der Könige, *ibid.* (2012) 228 Anm. 260.

<sup>33</sup> U. Weber, Zu den Felsbildnissen des Königs Narseh, in: *Res Orientales* XIX(2010) 305-319. - s. auch K. Mosig-Walburg, Das „sasanidische Kronengesetz“: Entstehung und Entwicklung eines modernen Konstrukts (2011) 446-473.

<sup>34</sup> E. Herzfeld, *La sculpture rupestre de la Perse sassanide*, in: *RAA* 5(1928) 129-142; hier 138. - *id.*, *Iran in the Ancient East* (1941) 326; Pl. CXXIV-V. - L. Vanden Berghe, *Archéologie de l'Irān ancien* (1959) 25, 149; Pl. 30b-c. - R. Göbl, *Investitur im sasanidischen Iran und ihre numismatische Bezeugung*, in *WZKM* 56(1960) 36-51 - E. F. Schmidt, *Persepolis III*(1970) 134. - G. Herrmann, *Naqsh-i Rostam 5 and 8. Sasanian Reliefs attributed to Hormuzd II and Narseh* (1977) 9; Fig. 2; Pl. 8. - K. Mosig-Walburg, *Die frühen sasanidischen Könige als Vertreter und Förderer der zarathustrischen Religion* (1982) 22-24. - A. Sh. Shahbazi, *Studies in Sasanian Prosopography*, in *AMI n. F.* 16(1983) 255-268; hier 257ff.: *Early Interpretations*. - L. Vanden Berghe, *Reliefs rupestres de l'Irān ancien* (1983) 140, Nr. 74. - M. Alram, *Early Sasanian Coinage* (2008) 17-30; hier 27-29. - U. Weber, *Zu den Felsbildnissen des Königs Narseh* (2010) 305-319. - *ead.*, *Narseh, König der Könige*, *ibid.* (2012) 273-284.

<sup>35</sup> Ph. Huyse, *ŠKZ* I(1999) 50 = § 37: Šābuhrduxtag, Königin der Saken.





Fig. 1a und b. Felsrelief des Narseh von Naqš-i Rustam (8)(VI). Ein Würdenträger/  
Hormezd (?) [II.], König Narseh, Ādur-Narseh (?) /Hormezd [II. ?] und Königin  
Šābuhrduxtag In: G. Herrmann, Naqsh-i Rustam 5 and 8. Sasanian Reliefs attributed to  
Hormuzd II and Narseh (1977) Pl. 8 (Foto); S. 9, Fig. 2: Zeichnung von R. Howell.

schwerlich abgegeben werden<sup>36</sup>. Auch G. Herrmann<sup>37</sup> verzichtete in ihrer Vorstellung des Reliefs im Rahmen des Corpus „Iranische Denkmäler“ auf eine eindeutige Stellungnahme. Nach E. F. Schmidt ist in der kleinen männlichen Figur Narsehs Sohn und Nachfolger, Hormezd, zu sehen<sup>38</sup>. Dagegen spricht sich L. Vanden Berghe für eine andere Deutung aus: er sieht in der kleinen Gestalt Ādur Narseh, Narsehs Enkel und Sohn Hormezds II., und in der Person hinter Narseh einen Würdenträger. Desungeachtet dürfte es naheliegend sein, dass auf diesem Relief Kronprinz Hormezd – direkt hinter Narseh stehend – mit einer spitz zulaufenden Kolāh abgebildet ist, deren Ende in einen Pferdkopf (?) mit anhängender Perle ausläuft. R. Gyselen<sup>39</sup> aber gibt zu bedenken, dass Hormezds II. Königskrone keinen Pferdekopf, sondern einen Adlerkopf mit Perle im Schnabel zeigt.

### **Hormezd II., König der Könige von Ērān und Anērān**

Die Zeitangaben zur Regierung Hormezds II. schwanken zwischen 5 und 9 Jahren. Während die Primärquellen über die Dauer seiner Herrschaft schweigen, geben die Quellen der sekundären und tertiären Überlieferung manch fehlerhafte Jahreszahlen an. Zu Recht setzt Agathias für Hormezd II. 7 Jahre und 5 Monate an, irrt andererseits aber, indem er für dessen Vater Narseh dieselbe Zeitspanne überliefert, obwohl er sich über diese Tatsache selbst wundert<sup>40</sup>. Fest steht jedoch, dass Narseh 9 Jahre das Sāsānidenreich regierte. Nach persischer Datierung begann Hormezds II. Regierung am 7. September des neuen Jahres 302 und endete ungefähr im Januar/Februar 310<sup>41</sup>, wenn man die angegebenen 5 Monate mit einbezieht. Diese Zeitspanne überliefern ebenfalls ad-Dīnawarī (7 Jahre), Euty-chius von Alexandria (7 J. und 5 Monate), Ibn al-Aṭīr (6 J., 5 M., daneben auch 7 J., 5 M.), Ibn Qutaiba (7 J., 5 M.), ebenso al-Maqdisī, al-Masʿūdī,

<sup>36</sup> M. Alram/R. Gyselen, SNS II(2012) 355.

<sup>37</sup> s. G. Herrmann, *ibid.* (1977) 9-11.

<sup>38</sup> E. F. Schmidt, *ibid.* (1970) 134.

<sup>39</sup> R. Gyselen, Vahrām III (293) and the Rock Relief of Naqsh-e Rostam II, in BAI n. s. 19(2005[2009]) 29-36; hier 32: „... one must bear in mind that Ohrmazd II's royal crown also included an animal head (fig. 3-b). But that was the head of an eagle, not of a horse”.

<sup>40</sup> Agathias IV 25,1.

<sup>41</sup> W. Felix, *Antike literarische Quellen zur Außenpolitik des Sāsānidenstaates* (1985) 110f. – Th. Nöldeke, *Geschichte der Perser und Araber zur Zeit der Sasaniden* (1879) 416f.

aṭ-Ṭabarī (aber auch 6 J. und 5 M.) und Mīrhwān (7 J., 5 M.); dagegen setzen Bar Hebraeus und die *Histoire Nestorienne* 5 Jahre an, Theophanes 6, Synkellos 8, Abū 'l-Fidā', al-Ya'qūbī und Firdausī 9 Jahre für Hormezds Regierungszeit an.

Wenig glaubwürdig erscheinen die Beschreibungen von Hormezds Charakter bei Ibn Qutaiba, aṭ-Ṭabarī und aṭ-Ta'ālībī<sup>42</sup>: Im Bewusstsein, dass seine Untertanen ihn als sehr streng und hart beurteilten und sich sogar vor ihm fürchteten, soll er seine Haltung geändert und nach seiner Thronbesteigung das Land fortan gerecht und milde regiert haben.

Zunächst ist zu fragen, welche politische Situation Hormezd II. bei seinem Amtsantritt vorfand. Wegen des verlorenen römisch-persischen Krieges und des schmachvollen Friedensvertrages von Nisibis hatte Narseh seinem Sohn Hormezd ein schweres Erbe hinterlassen<sup>43</sup>. Dass Narseh, Hormezd II. und später auch Šābuhr II.<sup>44</sup> sich mit den römischen Forderungen des *foedus* von Nisibis auf lange Sicht nicht zufrieden geben konnten, dürfte feststehen.

Innenpolitisch dürfte der demütigende Diktatfrieden auch einen unheilvollen Schatten auf König Narseh und seinen Thronerben Hormezd geworfen haben. Es ist nicht ausgeschlossen, dass der zeitweilige Ansehensverlust<sup>45</sup> des Königtums den unterschwellig bestehenden Konflikt zwischen Adelspartei und Großkönig erneut entfachte<sup>46</sup>. Man muss annehmen, dass Hormezd II. nicht die Autorität und das Ansehen seines Vaters Narseh besaß. Zehn Jahre zuvor (293), in den Auseinandersetzungen um die Thronfolge Wahrāms II., hatte ein Teil des Adels Narseh aufgefordert, den Thron des Reiches zu besteigen. Narseh ging der Ruf eines Königs mit langer Regierungserfahrung in zwei bedeutenden Vizekönigtümern voraus. Wie sehr sich diese Auseinandersetzungen zuspitzten, erfahren wir aus den Quellen nach dem Tode Hormezds II., als drei Thronprätendenten

<sup>42</sup> Ibn Qutaiba 655,15-18.- aṭ-Ṭabarī I 835,17-836,1. – aṭ-Ta'ālībī 510-511.

<sup>43</sup> Zur Bewertung des Friedensvertrages von 298 s. K. Mosig-Walburg, Römer und Perser (2009) 149-155.

<sup>44</sup> Ammianus Marcellinus, *Römische Geschichte* XVII 5,5-7: „Daher muß ich Armenien und Mesopotamien zurückverlangen, die meinem Großvater [Narseh] durch hinterlistigen Betrug geraubt wurden“ [aus dem Brief Šābuhrs II. an Constantius II.].

<sup>45</sup> R. C. Blockley, *East Roman Foreign Policy* (1992) 7.

<sup>46</sup> Welche Ausmaße dieser Konflikt annahm, zeigen die Kämpfe um die Thronfolge nach dem Tode Hormezds II. Erst als die Adelsversammlung Šābuhr [II.], den Sohn Hormezds II. zum Nachfolger bestimmt hatte, der bei seiner Thronbesteigung aber noch ein Kleinkind war, dürfte sich die innenpolitische Lage beruhigt haben.

ausgeschaltet wurden. Daraufhin bestimmte der Adelsrat ein Kleinkind, den späteren Šābuhr II., zum Nachfolger. Von daher ist es offensichtlich, dass die Adelspartei (vielleicht auch zusammen mit der zarathustrischen Geistlichkeit) seit der Gründung des Reiches (224) zu keinem Zeitpunkt über eine so große Machtbasis verfügt hatte wie zwischen den Jahren von ca. 309 bis 325 während der Kindheit und Jugend Šābuhrs II.

Außenpolitisch war das Sāsānidenreich aber wegen der umfangreichen Gebietsverluste an der westlichen Grenze aus militär-strategischen Gründen nicht imstande gewesen<sup>47</sup>, den Kampf gegen Rom wieder aufzunehmen: In die römische Einflussphäre übergegangen waren die geo-strategisch bedeutende Provinz Armenien und die transtigritanischen Gebiete im Nordosten Mesopotamiens. Gleichzeitig hatte das Sāsānidenreich in der Person des Königs von Iberien einen wichtigen Klientelkönig verloren, der im Kriegsfall mit Rom in der Lage war, den Pass von Darial<sup>48</sup> zu kontrollieren und außerdem die drohenden Einfälle der Steppenvölker aus dem Norden abzuwehren. Durch diese Gebietsverluste hatte sich die römische Reichsgrenze weit nach Osten verlagert<sup>49</sup>. Rom war erst am Ende des 3. Jahrhunderts in der Lage gewesen, die in den vorangegangenen Kriegen verlorenen Gebiete wieder zu gewinnen. In vorausschauender Weitsicht hatte sich Diokletian im Gegensatz zu Galerius' Plan, die Schwäche des Sāsānidenreiches militärisch auszunutzen, damit begnügt, sich mit dem überaus günstigen Friedensvertrag von Nisibis zufrieden zu geben<sup>50</sup>. Als Folge dieser klugen Politik Diokletians erlebten die römisch-persischen Beziehungen nach dem *foedus* von 298 und über das Ende der Herrschaft Hormezds II. hinaus keine ernsthaften Erschütterungen<sup>51</sup>. Andernfalls hätten sich diese Konflikte in den recht zahlreichen Quellen niedergeschlagen.

<sup>47</sup> So auch K. Mosig-Walburg, *Römer und Perser* (2009) 172.

<sup>48</sup> s. E. Kettenhofen, *Darband* (Ar. Bāb al-Abwāb), in *EncIr* VII,1(1994) 13-19; hier 14.

<sup>49</sup> E. Winter/B. Dignas, *Rom und das Perserreich* (2001) 152.

<sup>50</sup> Aurelius Victor 39,36-37. – W. Enßlin, *Zur Ostpolitik des Kaisers Diokletian* (1942) 77: "... daß ein Hinausgreifen über die alten Grenzen eine katastrophale Überspannung der Leistungsfähigkeit zur Folge haben müßte... Er [Diokletian] hatte auch im Osten erreicht, daß endlich das Reich wieder in seinen alten Grenzen dastand, und er war bereit, dem Verteidigungszweck jetzt auch die innere Gestaltung des Reichsbaues anzupassen".

<sup>51</sup> s. die ausführliche Diskussion zur umstrittenen vierzigjährigen Friedenszeit: K. Mosig-Walburg, *Rom und Perser* (2009) 157ff.

Der Hinweis auf das „uns verfeindete persische Volk“ (*Persica adversaria nobis gens*) im Manichäer-Edikt Diokletians<sup>52</sup> dürfte eher einer Beschreibung des *status quo* zwischen Rom und dem Sāsānidenreich entsprechen als darauf hindeuten, dass es zwischen beiden Partnern zu einem militärischen Konflikt gekommen wäre.

Im Gegensatz zu Aurelius Victor und Julian, die keine Nachrichten über militärische Konflikte erwähnen, berichtet Libanios<sup>53</sup> als Zeitzeuge des 4. Jahrhunderts, dass die Sāsāniden mit der Aufrüstung ihres Heeres über vier Jahrzehnte beschäftigt waren. Nach Libanios' Eindruck sahen die Sāsāniden in dem Abkommen mit den Römern wohl eher einen „vorläufigen“ Waffenstillstand denn einen Friedensvertrag. Die Tatsache aber, dass Libanios keine Kenntnis von militärischen Auseinandersetzungen mit dem römischen Reich hatte, weist auf die Einhaltung des Friedensabkommens hin. Bestätigt wird diese Aussage durch Festus, der von der Beachtung des Friedensvertrages von Nisibis bis in die Zeit Constantius II. spricht<sup>54</sup>.

Desungeachtet berichten zwei Chroniken von einem angeblichen Einfall Hormezds II. in das Römische Reich: Es sind dies die syrisch-nestorianische Chronik von Arbela (6. - 7. Jahrhundert) und die arabisch-sprachige *Histoire Nestorienne* (*Chronique de Séert*) (11. Jahrhundert)<sup>55</sup>. Beide Chroniken stehen in ihrer Überlieferung isoliert da und sollten auf ihre historische Glaubwürdigkeit in Bezug auf Hormezds angeblichen Einfall ins Römische Reich überprüft werden.

<sup>52</sup> Manichäer-Edikt Diokletians: *Mosaicarum et Romanarum Legum Collatio* (1940) 15,3,1-8 (S. 580-581). – Übers. in E. Winter/B. Dignas, *Rom und das Perserreich* (2001) 238-241; hier 238f.: „Die Manichäer ... sind erst ganz kürzlich ... wie neuartige und unerwartete Ungetüme aus dem uns verfeindeten persischen Volk in unsere Welt gedrun-gen oder aufgetaucht und begehen hier viele Verbrechen, da sie ruhige Völker zum Aufruhr bringen und ganz gewiß auch geordneten Staaten Schaden verursachen...“. – W. Ensslin, *Zur Ostpolitik des Kaisers Diokletian* (1942) 71.

<sup>53</sup> Libanios, *Kaiserreden* (2002) 63-72; hier *Oratio* LIX 63: „Die Situation war von den Persern her gesehen kein Frieden, sondern nur ein vorläufiger Waffenstillstand, und sie wünschten die Ruhe, nicht weil sie nicht mehr kämpfen wollten, sondern sie zogen sie vor, damit sie ruhmvoll kämpfen könnten. Sie mieden nicht ein- für allemal die Gefahr, sondern bereiteten sich auf die Größe der Gefahren vor und mischten gewissermaßen Frieden mit Krieg, indem sie friedliches Verhalten vortäuschten, letztlich aber auf Krieg abzielten...“

<sup>54</sup> Festus XIV 5: « *Quae condicio foederis in tempus dialis Constantii reservata duravit* ».

<sup>55</sup> Chronik von Arbela, hrsg. und übers. von P. Kawerau (1985) 45,9-15 [Text]; 67,6-11 [Übers.]. – *Histoire Nestorienne inédite (Chronique de Séert)*, s. *Patrologia Orientalis* IV,3(1908[1971]) 255,1-3.

Der Chronik von Arbela zufolge soll Hormezd II. die Unfähigkeit der Römer, „das Volk zu regieren“, ausgenutzt haben, um „mit einem großen Heer viele Städte der Römer zu plündern“<sup>56</sup>. Der zweite Teil dieser Begründung lässt wegen seiner Wortwahl an eine ἀγωγή Šābuhrs I. erinnern und dürfte den Tatbestand der Ereignisse stark übertreiben. Innenpolitisch erscheint es abwegig, dass sich Hormezd II. angesichts der verheerenden Niederlage des letzten römisch-persischen Kriegs, der bei Hormezds Regierungsantritt erst vier Jahre zurücklag, und den bitteren Erfahrungen des *foedus* von 298, ohne Not in ein solch waghalsiges Unternehmen gestürzt hätte. Darüber hinaus hätte Hormezd II. den Friedensvertrag von 298 gebrochen, dessen Missachtung gewiss nicht ohne schwerwiegende Folgen von Seiten der Römer geblieben wäre. Die Beweggründe für Hormezds II. angeblichen Kriegszug dürften in ihrer Tragweite überbewertet worden sein: Es ist kaum glaubhaft, dass allein die Streitigkeiten der Tetrarchen und die von Diokletian veranlasste Christenverfolgung das Römische Reich derart geschwächt haben könnten, so dass ein Kriegszug gegen Rom Erfolg versprechend gewesen wäre. Dass Hormezd II. aber allein aus „reiner Beutegier“<sup>57</sup> einen Einfall ins Römische Reich unternommen hätte, dürfte eher der Haltung eines aspbēd als dem eines šāhān šāh entsprechen. Es ist eher anzunehmen, dass es sich bei Hormezds „Kriegszug“ um Grenzstreitigkeiten mit kurzfristigen Grenzüberschreitungen oder Strafexpeditionen als um Plünderungen römischer Städte gehandelt haben könnte<sup>58</sup>. Der mangelnden Zuverlässigkeit zufolge kann die Überlieferung dieser in der wissenschaftlichen Diskussion umstrittenen Quelle nur unter Vorbehalt zur Kenntnis genommen werden<sup>59</sup>. Mit Recht gibt E. Kettenhofen zu bedenken, dass ein vermeintlicher Sieg Diokletians über Hormezd II. in den zeitgenössischen Quellen nicht hätte verschwiegen werden können<sup>60</sup>.

Im Gegensatz zur Chronik von Arbela gibt die *Histoire Nestorienne* eine andere Begründung für Hormezds angeblichen Kriegszug an: Danach habe

<sup>56</sup> E. Kettenhofen, *Die Chronik von Arbela in der Sicht der Althistorie* (1995) 287-319; hier 307-308.

<sup>57</sup> K. Mosig-Walburg, *ibid.* (2009) 177.

<sup>58</sup> Ebenso K. Mosig-Walburg, *ibid.* (2009) 181-182.

<sup>59</sup> E. Kettenhofen, *ibid.* (1995) 287-319; 316.

<sup>60</sup> E. Kettenhofen, *ibid.* (1995) 308.



Hormezd seinen Vater Narseh rächen\_wollen: l-yṭlb t'r 'byh)<sup>61</sup>. In der Folge dieses Rachefeldzugs aber habe Diokletian — so nach der Übersetzung A. Schers - Hormezd geschädigt. Zweifelsohne bezieht sich der erste Teil der Begründung auf den persisch-römischen Krieg und den Schmachfrieden von Nisibis (298), der für das Sāsānidenreich auf Dauer nicht hinnehmbar war und das Verhältnis zum Römischen Reich über Jahrzehnte belastete. Nach der — zweifellos korrekten — Übersetzung von R. Altheim-Stiehl, auf die sich K. Mosig-Walburg beruft<sup>62</sup>, wurde jedoch Diokletian durch Hormezd geschädigt. Die Interpretationen, die sich auf die Übersetzung A. Schers stützen, sind daher überholt<sup>63</sup>.

Zu den wenigen Nachrichten über Hormizds Regierungszeit gehört auch eine kurze Erwähnung bei Ḥamza al-Iṣḫānī: danach soll Hormezd II. in dem Gebiet von Rām-Hormezd in Ḥūzistān ein Dorf mit Namen *whšt Hurmuz* bzw. *kwrnk* gegründet haben<sup>64</sup>.

Die Quellenlage zum Tode Hormezd II. kann nur unter Vorbehalt zur Kenntnis genommen werden<sup>65</sup>. Während Ṭabarī überraschenderweise das Ende Hormezds II. nicht erwähnt, berichtet allein Bal'amī<sup>66</sup>, der sich überwiegend auf die Überlieferung des arabischen Chronisten stützt, von einem Überfall arabischer Ġassāniden auf Hormezd II. Nach Bal'amī soll der sāsānidische König zuvor eine Armee nach Syrien gesandt haben, um Tribut vom Stamme der Ġassān einzufordern. Noch bevor römische Hilfstruppen in Syrien eintrafen, um die der ġassānidische König den Kaiser gebeten hatte, wurde er im Kampf getötet und seine Armee besiegt. In einem Rachefeldzug sollen dann 4000 ġassānidische Krieger Hormezd II. während einer Jagd in Begleitung von 50 Jagdgefährten am Rande der Wüste überfallen und derart verletzt haben, dass er an den Folgen verstarb.

<sup>61</sup> Histoire Nestorienne in Patrologia Orientalis IV,3(1908[1971]) 255,1-3: « Il fit une expédition contre les Romains pour venger son père, mais Dioclétien lui infligea des pertes ».

<sup>62</sup> K. Mosig-Walburg, *ibid.* (2009) 176 mit Anm. 801.

<sup>63</sup> u. a. F. Kolb, Zu chronologischen Problemen der ersten Tetrarchie, in *Eos* 76(1988) 105-125; hier 123. - J. Wiesehöfer, l-yṭlb t'r 'byh. Hormizd II. und Rom (1989) 68 und Anm. 5; 71 und Anm. 29. - s. auch F. Decret, Les conséquences sur le christianisme en Perse de l'affrontement des empires romain et sassanide (1979) 91-152; hier 134 und Anm. 174. - M. - L. Chaumont, La christianisation de l'empire iranien (1988) 122.

<sup>64</sup> Ḥamza al-Iṣḫānī, *Annalium Libri X*, 1(1844) 51,13-19; hier 51,15.

<sup>65</sup> Th. Nöldeke, *Tabari* 51 Anm. 2.

<sup>66</sup> Bal'amī II, 90-91.

Es ist nicht ausgeschlossen, dass Bal'amīs Beschreibung der Ereignisse ein wahrer Kern zugrunde liegt. Dennoch dürfte die Darstellung der militärischen Auseinandersetzungen nicht der historischen Realität entsprechen<sup>67</sup>: Der Einsatz einer persischen Armee gegen den Stamm der Ġassāniden, der zu diesem Zeitpunkt dort noch nicht angesiedelt war<sup>68</sup>, nur um Tributzahlungen einzutreiben, scheint in ihren Dimensionen übertrieben und wenig glaubwürdig zu sein. Denkbar wäre, dass Bal'amī wohl an einen dort ansässigen arabischen Stamm dachte. Als ebenso abwegig wirkt das Hilfesuch des ġassānidischen Königs an den römischen Kaiser und ferner der Einsatz von 4000 arabischen Kriegern beim Überfall auf Hormezd II. während eines Jagdausflugs. - Dīnawarī<sup>69</sup> seinerseits berichtet recht lakonisch, dass Hormezd irgendwo an einer Grenze seines Reiches ums Leben gekommen sei.

### Titulatur Hormezds II.

Nach den Forschungen M. Alrams<sup>70</sup> liegt Hormezds II. Titulatur auf seinen Münzen in fünf von einander abweichenden Versionen vor. Der Wortlaut seiner Titulatur unterscheidet sich grundsätzlich nicht von der seines Vaters Narseh, wohl aber in der Länge der Legende. Die ausführliche Version lautet: *Die Mazda-verehrende Majestät Ohrmazd, der König der Könige der Iranier und Nicht-Iranier, dessen Geschlecht (Abbild/ Glanz) von den Göttern ist*<sup>71</sup>. M. Alram zufolge kommt diese lange Legende mit der Angabe *ud Anērān* bei Hormezd II. im Gegensatz zu den Formulierungen auf den Münzen König Narsehs „nur in Ausnahmefällen vor“. Dass der außenpolitisch so bedeutende Zusatz *Nicht-Iranier* (*ud Anērān*) in drei von fünf Legenden fehle, erlaube aber keine Schlussfolgerungen auf politische Veränderungen. Auffällig sind dennoch die verschiedenen verkürzten Versionen seiner Titulatur: Dabei fällt bei manchen Münzen der

<sup>67</sup> Th. Nöldeke, Tabari (1879) 51 Anm. 2.

<sup>68</sup> K. Mosig-Walburg, *ibid.* (2009) 180-181. – s. auch G. Fisher, *Between Empires: Arabs, Romans, and Sasanians in Late Antiquity*, Oxford 2011.

<sup>69</sup> Dīnawarī 47,11-12; 48,2.

<sup>70</sup> Zur Titulatur Hormezds II. auf Münzen s. M. Alram, Ohrmazd II. in: M. Alram/R. Gyselen, *SNS II*(2012) 353-433; 524-571; hier 360-361.

<sup>71</sup> M. Alram, *SNS II*(2012) 360 (2): *mzdysn bgy hwrmzdy* ( 'whrmzdy) *MRKAn MRKA 'yr'n W 'nyr'n MNW ctry MN yzd'n mazdēsn bay Ohrmazd šāhān šāh Ērān ud Anērān kē čīhr az yazdān*.

Zusatz, dessen Geschlecht (Abbild/Glanz) von den Göttern ist, weg. Die kürzeste Version lautet: *Die Mazda-verehrende Majestät Ohrmazd, der König der Könige.*

## Religionspolitik Hormezds II.

Im Gegensatz zu den ersten drei Sāsānidenkönigen wandten sich die beiden Wahrām-Könige (273-293) von der toleranten Religionspolitik ihrer Vorgänger ab und bekämpften alle anderen Religionen: Unter dem Einfluss Kerdīrs waren Christen, aber in besonderem Maße die Anhänger des Manichäismus als Erzfeinde des Zarathustrismus den Verfolgungen ausgesetzt gewesen. Gegen Ende der Herrschaft Wahrāms II. soll sich die Lage der Manichäer grundlegend verändert haben, da es dem zweiten Nachfolger Mānīs, dem ἀρχηγός Innaios gelang, den König zu heilen<sup>72</sup>. Ob aber die Verfolgung der Manichäer wirklich schon in den letzten drei Jahren der Herrschaft Wahrāms II. beendet war, muss bezweifelt werden, wie schon W. Seston im Jahre 1939 bemerkte<sup>73</sup>. Das vermeintliche Ende der Verfolgung der Manichäer in den Manichäischen Homilien läßt sich nicht mit der Überlieferung aus der Chester Beatty Library in Einklang bringen, die von Verfolgungen in den ersten Jahren der Regierung König Narsehs berichtet. Wenn dies nicht so gewesen wäre, hätten sich die manichäischen Gemeinden in ihrer Bedrängnis nicht an König Amarō von al-Ĥīra gewandt. Unter König Narseh hatten sich jedoch die Akzente der Religionspolitik entscheidend verändert; nicht die einseitige Förderung des Zarathustrismus und die Verfolgung anderer Religionsgemeinschaften, sondern die religiöse Toleranz der ersten drei Sāsānidenherrscher hatte wieder die Oberhand gewonnen<sup>74</sup>. In der Bedrängnis ihrer Verfolgungen aber hatten sich die manichäischen Gemeinden an den Laḥmidenkönig Amarō von al-Ĥīra<sup>75</sup>, einen Anhänger König Narsehs gewandt. Durch

<sup>72</sup> Manichaeen Homilies (2006) 83,21-84,34: zu Sisinnios und Innaios.

<sup>73</sup> W. Seston, *Le roi sassanide Narsès, les Arabes et le manichéisme* (1939) 229.

<sup>74</sup> U. Weber, Narseh, König der Könige von Ērān und Anērān, in *IrAnt* 47(2012) 153-302; hier 253-261. – I. Toral-Niehoff, *Al-Ĥīra. Eine arabische Kulturmetropole im spätantiken Kontext* (2014) 54-58.

<sup>75</sup> H. H. Schaeder erkannte im Laḥmidenkönig 'Amr b. 'Adī den aus der Pāikūlī-Inschrift bekannten Anhänger des Großkönigs wieder: H. Humbach/P. O. Skjærvø, *The Sassanian Inscription of Paikuli* 3,1(1983) 71, § 92. – 3,2(1983) 126: mp. W 'm[rw] lhm'dyn ML(KA); pa. W 'mrw lhm'yšn MLKA. – H. H. Schaeder, Rezension von: C. Schmidt und H. J. Polotsky, *Ein Mani-Fund in Ägypten*, (1933) 4-90, *Gnomon* 9(1933) 337-362.

dessen Fürsprache erwarben sich die Manichäer in der Person des Narseh einen verlässlichen Schutzherrn. Als Vermittler zwischen dem König Amarō und Narseh dürfte Innaios in seiner Funktion als Oberhaupt der Manichäer eine entscheidende Rolle gespielt haben. Zu Narsehs Lebzeiten konnten die Manichäer sich in Freiheit zu ihrer Religion bekennen und eine rege Missionstätigkeit entfalten.

Über die religiösen Verhältnisse unter der Herrschaft Hormezds II. berichten dagegen nur zwei Quellen mit unzureichenden Aussagen. Der *Histoire Nestorienne*<sup>76</sup> zufolge wären die Christen in dieser Zeit keinen Verfolgungen ausgesetzt gewesen. Als Erklärung dient der Chronik ein Hinweis auf Hormezds geistige Unabhängigkeit im Verhältnis zur machtbewußten zarathustrischen Geistlichkeit, deren Religionspolitik er allem Anschein nicht folgte. Diese innere Unabhängigkeit soll Hormezd auch auf dem Gebiet der Staatsgeschäfte gezeigt haben<sup>77</sup>. Über Hormezds Verhältnis zu den Manichäern äußert sich diese Quelle aber nicht.

Aus einer manichäischen Quelle in koptischer Sprache, deren Inhaltsbeschreibung auf C. Schmidt und H. J. Polotsky zurückgeht<sup>78</sup>, ist zu erfahren, dass der Religionsfriede mit den Manichäern schon zu Beginn der Regierung Hormezds II. beendet war. N. A. Pedersen wird die Veröffentlichung des betreffenden Text verdankt<sup>79</sup>. Ungeachtet des unvollständig erhaltenen Textbestands, der die Namen von historischen Persönlichkeiten enthält und einen Zeitraum von mehr als 30 Jahren umfasst, ist festzuhalten, dass diese Quelle wohl nicht als zuverlässig eingeschätzt werden kann<sup>80</sup>.

## Darstellungen König Hormezds II.

Neben den Münzen sind bisher nur zwei Darstellungen König Hormezds II. bekannt geworden: Auf einem Reiterkampfreief am Felsen von

<sup>76</sup> *Histoire Nestorienne* in *Patrologia Orientalis* IV,3(1908[1971]) 255,1-3: « Il se montra indépendant dans ses idées sur l'administration des affaires et n'écoula pas les Mages. Sous son règne, les Chrétiens n'eurent point à souffrir ».

<sup>77</sup> J. Wiesehöfer, 'Geteilte Loyalitäten'. Religiöse Minderheiten des 3. und 4. Jahrhunderts n. Chr. im Spannungsfeld zwischen Rom und dem sāsānidischen Iran (1993) 362-382; hier 375 Anm. 68.

<sup>78</sup> C. Schmidt/H. J. Polotsky, Ein Mani-Fund in Ägypten (1933) 4-90; Taf. 1-2; hier 28-29. – s. dazu die Rezension von H. H. Schaeder, *Gnomon* 9(1933) 337-362.

<sup>79</sup> N. A. Pedersen, A Manichaean Historical Text, in *ZPE* 119(1997) 193-201; Pl. 99-100.

<sup>80</sup> N. A. Pedersen, *ibid.* (1997) 200-201.

Naqš-i Rostam (NRm 5) und auf einer silbernen, wohl aber nicht zeitgenössischen Jagdschale im Cleveland Museum of Art. Nach Ḥamza al-Iṣḫānī (\*ca. 893, + zwischen 961 und 970), der sich bei seiner knappen Darstellung des königlichen Ornaments auf das „Bilderbuch der Sāsānidenkönige“<sup>81</sup> bezieht, trug Hormezd II. ein rotes, besticktes Gewand, hell blaue bestickte Hosen und eine grüne Krone<sup>82</sup>.

Im Gegensatz zu dieser knappen und späten Schilderung, die auch im Hinblick auf die Kronendarstellung der anderen Könige sich als nicht zuverlässig erweist, liefern die Münzen Hormezds II. als Primärquellen ein reales Abbild seiner Krone (Fig. 2).



Fig. 2. Avers und Revers einer Münze Hormezds II.  
Kunsthistorisches Museum Wien: Abdruck mit freundlicher Genehmigung M. Alrams

Auf dem Avers der Münzen ist die Büste Hormezd II. — nach rechts gerichtet — mit seiner ihn kennzeichnenden Vogelkopfkrone<sup>83</sup> zu sehen. Diese besteht neben dem hohen Korymbos aus einem Falkenkopf, „königliches Emblem und Symbol des Gottes Verethragna“, mit einer Perle im Schnabel und seitlich angebrachten Flügeln, die an die Krone Wahrāms II.

<sup>81</sup> Zum „Bilderbuch der Sāsānidenkönige“, auf das sich al-Masʿūdī (Kitāb at-tanbīh wa ʿl-ischrāf 106,5-107,5) und Ḥamza al-Iṣḫānī (Annalium Libri X) I(1844) beziehen, s. H. H. Schaeder, Über das ‚Bilderbuch der Sasaniden-Könige‘ (1936) 231-232. – Kontrovers verlief die Diskussion über die Zuverlässigkeit dieser Quelle: E. Herzfeld, Khusraus II Krone: al-tādj al-kabīr: die Kronen der sasanidischen Könige (1938) 101-104. – K. Erdmann, Die Entwicklung der sāsānidischen Krone (1951) 89f. Anm. 10; 96f. Anm. 35. – R. Göbl, Der Triumph des Sāsāniden Šāhpuhr über die Kaiser Gordianus, Philippus und Valerianus (1974) 35 Anm. 109.

<sup>82</sup> Ḥamza al-Iṣḫānī I(1844) 51,13-19; hier 51,16-19; latein. Übers. II(1848) 37,21-27. – Engl. Übers.: The Annals of Ḥamzah al-Iṣḫānī, in Journal of the K. R. Cama Oriental Institute 22(1932) 98.

<sup>83</sup> Den Ausführungen zur Krone Hormezds II. liegen die Forschungsergebnisse M. Alrams zugrunde: M. Alram, Ohrmezd II., in SNS II(2012) 357-359; 380-396; hier 356-359; 362-367. – M. Alram sieht in diesem Vogel wohl einen Falken, während H. von Gall in ihm eher einen Adler entdeckt: Das Reiterkampfbild (1990) 30.

erinnern. Der über der Stirn angesetzte Falkenkopf mit oftmals langem Vogelhals und den seitlichen Flügeln verdecken die bei anderen Kronen sichtbare Schädelskappe. M. Alram stellte fest, dass Hormezd II. als neues Element eine Perlenreihe am oberen Rand des Diademreifs einführt, das von Šābuhr II. an seiner Mauerzinnenkrone später wieder aufgenommen wird. Der hohe Korymbos wird ebenfalls von einer Perlenreihe umrahmt, ist reich gefaltet und mit Dreipunkten verziert. Deutlich sichtbar sind die kleinen den Korymbos abbindenden Bänder oberhalb der Flügel. Über den im Nacken zurückgekämmten Haarballen sind die „vom Diademreif flatternden Bänder“<sup>84</sup> angeordnet.

M. Alram zufolge „führt Hormezd II. einen neuen Reversstyp ein“: in den Flammen des Feueraltars erscheint nun eine männliche Büste, barhäuptig, aber mit Vollbart und zwei gut sichtbaren Haarballen rechts und links des Kopfes. Auf sorgfältig gearbeiteten Stempeln soll sogar ein „Diademband“ im Haar sichtbar sein. Auffällig ist, dass die Büste auf einigen Reversen frontal ausgerichtet ist, in der überwiegenden Zahl der Reversen wendet sie sich aber der linken Figur neben dem Feueraltar zu. Aber auch eine Ausrichtung der Büste zur rechten Figur neben dem Altar ist belegt. In Bezug auf die Gestaltung der Tunika und den Perlenschmuck zeigt diese Büste große Ähnlichkeit mit der des Königs auf dem Avers. Wen Hormezd II. mit dieser Büste in den Flammen des Feueraltars darstellen wollte, kann nach dem Urteil M. Alrams und dem derzeitigen Wissensstand nicht mit Sicherheit beantwortet werden<sup>85</sup>. Von den beiden männlichen Figuren links und rechts des Feueraltars kann die linke wegen der oben beschriebenen Vogelkopfkronen eindeutig als König Hormezd II. angesehen werden. Unsicher bleibt dagegen die Deutung der rechten Figur, die wegen ihrer kennzeichnenden Attribute mit Mauerzinnenkrone und Korymbos wohl nur einen König darstellen kann. M. Alram hält es nicht

<sup>84</sup> s. Anm. 83.

<sup>85</sup> M. Alram, *ibid.* II(2012) 362: „Göbl [Sasanidische Numismatik (1968) 19f.] hat mit Verweis auf die Sonderaverse des Shapur II., Shapur III. und Wahram IV., die den König — wie die Büste in Flammen — barhaupt mit diademierte Kunstfrisur zeigen, sowie mit Hinweis auf die Reverse des Wahram V. und Walkash, wo die Büste vor die Altarplatte gesetzt ist und die Krone des jeweiligen Königs trägt, für eine Darstellung des Königs plädiert“. - N. Schindel schloss sich der Deutung R. Göbels an [N. Schindel, *SNS* III/1, 89; 348] und „hat darüber hinaus auch — ausgehend von der Überlieferung zu Wahram V. — eine Anspielung auf die militärische Komponente des sasanidischen Königtums und das Feuerheiligtum Adur-i Gushnasp erwogen“ [*SNS* III/1, p. 89 und 348].



für ausgeschlossen, dass hier Hormezd II. zusammen mit seinem Großvater Šābuhr I. als Wächter des dynastischen Feuers“ dargestellt ist<sup>86</sup>.

Das einzige Relief, das bisher von Hormezd II. überliefert ist (Fig. 3a und 3b), findet sich am Felsen von Naqš-i Rostam<sup>87</sup> (NRm 5) unterhalb des Grabes von Artaxerxes' I. (?). Es wurde 1938 von E. F. Schmidt entdeckt und wegen der am Diademreif angebrachten Flügeln Wahrām II. zugeordnet<sup>88</sup>.

Im Jahre 1950 veröffentlichte R. Ghirshman<sup>89</sup> seine Beobachtung, dass das Relief eher Hormezd II. zuzuschreiben ist: er erkannte ungeachtet der starken Zerstörung, dass die vor der Stirn des Königs hängende, heute noch deutlich sichtbare Perle zum Schnabel eines Vogels gehören müsste, der in dieser Kombination von den Münzen Hormezds II. her bekannt ist. Abgesehen von einem Einwand W. B. Hennings<sup>90</sup>, der die Zuweisung dieses Reliefs an Hormezd II. wegen der starken Verwitterung der königlichen Krone bezweifelte, sind bislang keine neuen Deutungen bekannt geworden.

Nach H. von Gall misst das Relief 8,01 m in der Breite, 3,65 m in der Höhe und weist eine Relieftiefe zwischen 0,02 m bis 0,31 m<sup>91</sup> auf. Es handelt sich bei diesem Relief um eine sehr lebendige Darstellung eines Reiterkampfbildes, an dem drei berittene Personen beteiligt sind. In der Mitte des Reliefs reitet Hormezd II., nach rechts gerichtet, im fliegendem Galopp

<sup>86</sup> s. Anm. 83, S. 363.

<sup>87</sup> E. F. Schmidt, *Persepolis III* (1970) 135-136; Pl. 92-93. – R. Ghirshman, *Notes iraniennes III: à propos des bas-reliefs rupestres sassanides*, in *Artibus Asiae* XIII (1950) 86-90; figs. 4-6. – id., *Iran, Parthians and Sassanians* (1962) 179; illustr. 156; 219; 220. – L. Vanden Berghe, *Archéologie de l'Irān ancien* (1966) 25; 149; Pl. 29c. – W. Hinz, *Altiranische Funde und Forschungen* (1969) 206-215; Pls. 133a-b. – G. Herrmann, *Naqsh-i Rostam 5 and 8. Sasanian Reliefs attributed to Hormuzd II and Narseh* (1977) 6-9; Pl. 1-7; 14b and d; Fig. 1: Bisher einzige gründliche Bearbeitung des Reliefs mit zahlreichen Photographien und einer Umzeichnung von R. Howell. – L. Vanden Berghe, *Reliefs rupestres de l'Irān ancien* (1983) 85; 141 (cat. n<sup>os</sup> 77-78; Pl. 33. – H. von Gall, *Das Reiterkampfbild in der iranischen und iranisch beeinflussten Kunst parthischer und sasanidischer Zeit* (1990) 30f.; Abb. 4; Taf. 9a-c.

<sup>88</sup> E. F. Schmidt, *Persepolis III* (1970) 17.

<sup>89</sup> R. Ghirshman, *Notes iraniennes III* (1950) 88-90. – G. Herrmann, *ibid.* (1977) Pl. 4, Fig. 1.

<sup>90</sup> W. B. Henning, *The Monuments and Inscriptions of Tang-i Sarvak*, in *Asia Major* 2 (1951-52) 161.

<sup>91</sup> H. von Gall, *ibid.* (1990) 30f. mit ausführlicher Beschreibung des Reliefs. – Die von H. von Gall übernommenen Formulierungen sind im Text durch Anführungszeichen kenntlich gemacht.

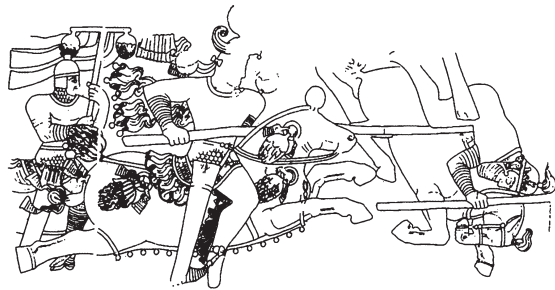


Fig. 3a und b. Reiterkampfrelied Hormezds II. von Naqš-i Rustam (NRm V). Foto: W. G. Lukonin, *Persien II.* München (1967) Abb. 134. Zeichnung: G. Herrmann, *Naqsh-i Rustam 5 and 8. Sasanian Reliefs attributed to Hormuzd II and Narseh* (1977) Fig. 1.

auf seinen Feind zu. Nach der Feststellung H. von Galls handelt es sich nur dann um einen fliegenden Galopp, wenn „beide Beinpaare annähernd waagrecht vom Körper abgestreckt sind“<sup>92</sup> und das Tempo der Geschwindigkeit eigens hervorgehoben werden soll. Betrachtet man das Relief, so fällt auf, dass die Darstellung des Königs auf dem stark gestreckt wirkendem Pferdekörper mehr als die Hälfte des Reliefs einnimmt. Es ist der Moment festgehalten, in dem Hormezd nach erfolgtem Stoß seiner

<sup>92</sup> H. von Gall, *ibid.* (1990) 81-87 [Vergleich zwischen fliegendem und gestrecktem Galopp]: als bekanntestes Beispiel nennt er den Pariser Kameo, *ibid.* (1990) Taf. 19.

langen Lanze den Feind aus dem Sattel kopfüber senkrecht zu Boden stürzen sieht<sup>93</sup>. Der König trägt einen deutlich sichtbaren Schuppenpanzer, der nach den Beobachtungen von H. von Gall „auf dem Oberkörper durch ein vermutlich ledernes (?) Wams bedeckt ist“. Zwei dicke Kugeln sind rechts und links der Schultern angebracht. Zum weiteren Schutz des Königs gehören „Schienenpanzerärmel“ und lederne „Beinlinge“.

Der Gegner des Königs, in seinen Dimensionen viel kleiner dargestellt als Hormezd II., nimmt in der von oben nach unten stürzenden Bewegung zusammen mit dem fallenden Pferdekörper nur ein Drittel der Reliefbreite ein. Im Sturz trägt er noch seine abgebrochene Lanze in der Rechten. Man darf davon ausgehen, dass die Schutzkleidung während des Kampfes der des Königs entspricht. Da dem Reiterkampfbild eine Inschrift fehlt, muss die Deutung des Gegners offenbleiben. Dass es sich bei Hormezds Gegner vielleicht um einen König oder zumindest um ein Mitglied der Aristokratie handeln muss, beweist seine Kopfbedeckung. Es handelt sich um einen Helm ohne Nackenschutz, aber versehen mit einer „kunstvoll geschnittenen Wangenklappe“. Zwei Embleme, eine „geöffnete Knospe“ und darunter „zwei Paar einander zugewandte Lilien“<sup>94</sup> zeichnen ihn als Würdenträger aus. H. von Gall nimmt an, dass diese Embleme wohl nicht als „Mützenbesatz“ gelten können, sondern eher an dem deutlich sichtbaren Reifen befestigt waren. Von daher könnte es sich um eine Krone handeln, die über den Helm gesetzt wurde. Zweifelsohne wirft diese Kopfbedeckung des Gegners Fragen nach der Identität dieses Gegners auf. W. Hinz' Annahme, dass es sich hier um Pābag, den ehemaligen Satrapen von Georgien und späteren Vizekönig Wahrāms II., handeln könnte, lässt sich nicht durch Quellen belegen. Von daher ist auch W. Hinz' Deutung des Reliefs abzulehnen, dass es sich hier um einen Machtkampf zwischen dem angeblich zu mächtig gewordenen Vizekönig Pābag und Hormezd II. handeln<sup>95</sup> könnte.

<sup>93</sup> „Zum sog. Reitersturz“ s. H. von Gall, *ibid.* (1990) 87-88.

<sup>94</sup> G. Herrmann, *ibid.* (1977) Fig. 1; Pl. 7. - H. von Gall, *ibid.* (1990) Taf. 9c.

<sup>95</sup> W. Hinz, *Altiranische Funde und Forschungen* (1969) 198; 201; 206; 209; 215. – W. Hinz' Deutung stützt sich auf die Feststellung, dass zwei Pagen auf dem Siegesrelief Ardašīrs I. von Firūzābād und auf seinen Investiturreliefs von Naqš-i Rajab III und Naqš-i Rostam (NRm I) offenbar das gleiche Emblem der geöffneten Knospe tragen. Ob diese Pagen derselben Familie angehörten, muss allerdings offenbleiben. Dass dieses Emblem in leicht erweiterter Form auch auf der Kolāh des zweiten Würdenträgers neben Wahrām II. auf dessen Relief in Naqš-i Wahrām zu sehen ist, veranlasste W. Hinz, in ihm den Vizekönig Pābag zu sehen, der auch zum Hofstaat Wahrāms II. in Naqš-i Rostam (II)

Hinter Hormezd II. reitet sein Standartenträger, der aber nur als Randfigur gestaltet ist und ca. ein sechstel der Fläche des Reliefs einnimmt. Das Pferd des Standartenträgers wird von dem des Königs Hormezd fast ganz verdeckt. Er trägt den gleichen Schuppenpanzer, ebenso einen „Schiennenpanzer“ an Armen und Beinen wie der Großkönig. Obwohl er dem König in gestrecktem Galopp folgt, ist er in der Lage, den Schaft der Standarte scheinbar mühelos hoch zu halten. Dieser Standartenträger zeichnet sich aus durch einen „eng anliegenden Helm“, allerdings ohne Embleme. Auffällig ist der breite Nackenschutz, der bis über die Ohren reicht.

Man muss fragen, welchen Zweck die Darstellung dieses Reiterkampfbildes für Hormezd II. in Naqš-i Rostam erfüllen sollte. Fest steht, dass es wegen seiner ähnlichen Komposition in der Tradition des Reliefs Ardašīr I. (Zweikampf zwischen Ardašīr I. und dem zu Boden stürzenden Ardawān IV.) in Tang-e Āb bei Fīrūzābād (I) (Schlacht von Hormuzdagān: 224) steht. Es ist aber auch nicht auszuschließen, dass die oben beschriebene Reiterkampfszene Hormezds II. an interne Machtkämpfe im Sāsānidenreich erinnern sollte, die aber nicht durch Quellen belegt sind. Schon zu Lebzeiten Hormezds II. dürfte es zu Machtkämpfen mit Adel und Klerus gekommen sein, die sich später in den Quellenberichten um seine Thronfolge widerspiegeln. Zu Recht macht R. N. Frye auf das Erstarken des Adels und der zarathustrischen Geistlichkeit seit der Regentschaft Wahrāms II. aufmerksam<sup>96</sup>. Hormezd II. dürfte ganz bewusst die Felswand von Naqš-i Rostam ausgesucht haben, um die Darstellung seines Sieges in der Nachbarschaft der bekannten Reliefs seiner Vorgänger zu demonstrieren (seines Urgroßvaters Ardašīr I., seines Großvaters Šābuhr I., ferner seines Großonkels Wahrām II. und seines Vaters Narseh).

Abzulehnen ist m. E. die These L. Vanden Berghes, dass die Reiterkampfbilder Ardašīr I., Wahrāms II. und Hormezds II., wahrscheinlich keine historischen Ereignisse widerspiegeln, sondern eher als Darstellungen von Reiterkampfturnieren zu interpretieren sind.

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gehören soll. Allerdings unterscheidet sich seine Kopfbedeckung von denen der anderen durch einen Halbmond und eine Scheibe. - W. G. Lukonin zufolge zeigt dieses Felsrelief eher den Sieg Hormezds II. über die Kāren [W. G. Lukonin, *Persien II*(1967) 128, Abb. 134].

<sup>96</sup> R. N. Frye, *The History of Ancient Iran* (1984) 308: "The power of the local nobility and clergy had been increasing probably since the time of Bahram II, and it culminated in a decision to give the crown to an unborn child who became Shapur II...".



Fig. 4a und b. Teilvergoldete Silberschale Hormezds II. D. G. Shepherd, *Sasanian Art in Cleveland*, Bulletin of the Cleveland Museum of Art 51(1964) 80. W. G. Lukonin, *Persien II*, München (1967) Abb. 151: Ausschnitt.

Eine weitere Darstellung Hormezds II. findet sich auf einer teilvergoldeten Silberschale (Fig. 4a und 4b), die vom Cleveland Museum of Art erworben wurde<sup>97</sup> und angeblich aus dem Iran stammt. Es handelt sich um eine Jagdschale mit dem Abbild eines Löwen jagenden Hormezd II., der die für ihn kennzeichnende Vogelkopfkrone trägt.

Die Vergoldung betrifft die zwei Löwen und den berittenen König Hormezd II.; ausgenommen von dieser Vergoldung sind Gesicht, Hals und Hände. Die Aufteilung der runden Bildfläche ist derart geschickt konzipiert, so dass das Ausmaß der Geschwindigkeit des nach links galoppierenden Hormezd, der von einem ihn angreifenden, hochspringenden Löwen verfolgt wird, eindrucksvoll zum Ausdruck kommt. Ein zweiter Löwe, den der König schon erlegt hat, liegt mit dem Tod bringenden Pfeil im Rücken unter den Hufen seines Pferdes hingestreckt am Boden. In dieser Jagdszene

<sup>97</sup> D. G. Shepherd, *Sasanian Art in Cleveland*, in *The Bulletin of the Cleveland Museum of Art* LI,4(1964) 66-92; hier 73-76; 80: color plate; Figs. 11-14. – Zur Inschrift der Schale s. R. N. Frye, *ibid.* (1964) 92-93. – W. G. Lukonin, *Persien II* (1967) fig. 151. – P. O. Harper, *The Royal Hunter. Art of the Sasanian empire* (1978) 38-39; no. 6. – P. O. Harper/P. Meyers, *Silver Vessels of the Sasanian Period. Vol. I: Royal Imagery* (1981) 60-61; 87; 171; Pl. 14. – S. 171: Gewicht der Schale: ca. 546 mg.; Durchmesser 20,6; Höhe 2,7.



ist der Moment festgehalten, in dem der König sich in der Art des parthischen Schusses<sup>98</sup> nach hinten wendet, um im nächsten Augenblick den tödlichen Pfeil auf den ihn von hinten verfolgenden Löwen abzuschießen.

### **König Hormezds II. Familie und die Probleme seiner Nachfolge**

Die dürftige und teilweise unzuverlässige Quellenlage mit stark divergierenden Nachrichten erschwert eine realistische Darstellung der Nachkommenschaft König Hormezds II. Im Folgenden sollen seine Nachkommen kurz vorgestellt werden; eine erschöpfende Darstellung ihres politischen Wirkens wie im Falle Šābuhrs II., Ardašīrs II. und Šābuhrs III. in Verbindung mit dem oft sehr problematischen Verwandtschaftsverhältnis würde den Rahmen dieses Aufsatzes sprengen.

Entgegen der oft unklaren Familienverhältnisse ist aber die Genealogie der Könige Hormezd II. (302-309), seines Sohnes Šābuhr II. (309/10-379) und seines Enkels Šābuhr III. (383-388) durch das Zeugnis der Primärquellen, der Inschriften von Țāq-i Bustān I-II<sup>99</sup>, eindeutig belegt.

Die Sekundärquellen zu dieser Genealogie, vertreten allein durch zwei römisch-byzantinische Chronisten, Agathias und Ammianus Marcellinus, überliefern keine eindeutig klare Aussage zur Vaterschaft Hormezds II. Während sich die Vater-Sohn-Beziehung Hormezds II. zu Šābuhr II. bei Agathias (IV 25) nur aus dem Zusammenhang des Textes ableiten läßt, weist die Aussage bei Ammianus Marcellinus<sup>100</sup> auf Hormezd II. hin.

Die arabo-persischen Tertiärquellen stimmen darin überein, dass Hormezd II., ohne einen designierten Thronfolger hinterlassen zu haben, verstarb<sup>101</sup>. Wider Erwarten befand sich aber im Ḥarīm Hormezds II. eine

<sup>98</sup> J. Wiesehöfer, Der parthische Schuss, in *Der Neue Pauly* IX(2000) 379.

<sup>99</sup> M. Back, SSI (1978) 490f.

<sup>100</sup> Amm. Marc. XVII 5,6: *ideoque Armeniam recuperare cum Mesopotamia debeo auo meo composita fraude praereptam*. - Auch wenn Šābuhr II. sich an dieser Stelle auf seinen Großvater Narseh bezieht, so weist diese Aussage auf Hormezd II. als Vater Šābuhrs II. hin.

<sup>101</sup> Agathias IV 25,2. - A. Cameron, Agathias on the Sassanians (1969-1970) 144. - *Histoire Nestorienne* 287,9-288,1. - Abū 'l-Fidā' 82,23-26. - Eutychius von Alexandria 114,20-115,3; lat. Übers. S. 997: 397-399 [*Patrologia Graeca* Bd 111(1863)]. - Ibn al-Aṭīr 391,8-392,5. - Ibn Qutaiba 656,1-11. - al-Maqdisī 159,13-160,4. - at-Ṭabarī 836,1-6. - Th. Nöldeke, Tabari 51. - at-Ta'ālībī 510-512. - al-Ya'qūbī I 182,14-183,4. - al-Mas'ūdī, Murūğ ad-ḍahab 295,4-5 = § 600; 295,10-11 = § 601. - ad-Dīnawarī 47,11-17. - Bal'amī II 90-91. - Firdausī V 421-423; 425ff.



schwängere Frau, deren posthum geborener Sohn, der spätere Šābuhr II., von der Adelspartei und wahrscheinlich auch von der zarathustrischen Geistlichkeit zum Thronfolger bestimmt wurde. Man darf davon ausgehen, dass dieser posthum geborene Sohn mit dem Šābuhr der Inschriften von Tāq-i Bustān I und II identisch ist.

Die wenig glaubwürdige Schilderung der Thronfolgeregelung nach dem Tode Hormezds II., bei der ein noch ungeborenes Kind im Mutterleib, ungeachtet der Ungewissheit, ob die Mutter einen Jungen oder ein Mädchen gebiert, zum Thronfolger bestimmt wird, indem die Magier angeblich eine Krone über dem Leib der Mutter herabsenken lassen, weist auf verworrene politische Verhältnisse hin. Auch die Aussage von Ṭabarī (835,3-4), Taʿālibī (511-512) und Balʿamī (90) [u. a.], dass Hormezd II. vor seinem Tode den noch nicht geborenen Sohn zum Nachfolger bestellt hätte mit der Anweisung, ihn Šābuhr zu nennen, wirkt ebenfalls nicht überzeugend. In der Tradition dieser drei Autoren steht auch al-Yaʿqūbī (I 182,14-16). Nach Th. Nöldeke „beruht diese Nachricht auf einer verständigen Combination, aber nicht auf historischer Überlieferung“<sup>102</sup>.

Firdausī<sup>103</sup> zufolge wurde Šābuhr vierzig Tage nach dem Tode seines Vaters zum Nachfolger Hormezds II. ernannt, Balʿamī (II 90-91) aber spricht von einer Thronvakanz von 6 Monaten, die angesichts der Einsetzung des nur kurz regierenden Sohnes Ādur Narseh und der abzuwartenden Geburt Šābuhrs [II.] durchaus plausibel erscheint.

Zwei Frauen aus dem Ḥarīm Hormezds II., die wegen ihrer Herkunft wohl nicht den Rang einer Königin der Königinnen beansprucht haben können, werden in der wissenschaftlichen Diskussion als mögliche Mütter Šābuhrs II. genannt: Es ist dies zunächst die aus dem Babylonischen Talmūd namentlich bekannte „Īphrā Hōrmīzd, Mutter Šābuhrs“ II.<sup>104</sup>, von

<sup>102</sup> Th. Nöldeke, Tabari (1879) 51 Anm. 3.

<sup>103</sup> Firdausī, *ibid.* V(1866) 425 = XXIX.

<sup>104</sup> F. Justi, *Iranisches Namenbuch* (1895) 141: s. v. Īfrā-Hōrmīz (talmud.), Mutter Sapors II. - E. Herzfeld, Paikuli (1924) 44. - G. Wiessner, *Untersuchungen zu einer Gruppe syrischer Märtyrerakten aus der Christenverfolgung Schapurs II.*, Phil. Diss. (1962) 304 Anm. 52; 325 Anm. 367. - J. Neusner, *A History of the Jews in Babylonia IV* (1969) 35-39. - D. Goodblatt, 'ypr' hwrmyz Mother of King Shapur and 'pr' hwrmyz Mother of Khusro. A Note on the Name 'ypr' / 'pr' hwrmyz, in *JAOS* 96(1976) 135-136. - G. G. Blum, *Zur religionspolitischen Situation der persischen Kirche im dritten und vierten Jahrhundert* (1980) 11-32; hier 30. - W. Schwaigert, *Das Christentum in Hūzistān* (1989) 126; 131; 245 Anm. 137; 250 Anm. 160.

der auch die *Histoire Nestorienne* berichtet<sup>105</sup>, allerdings ohne Erwähnung ihres Namens, der bis heute ungeklärt bleibt und der in keiner sonstigen Quelle überliefert ist. Diese Tatsache weckt erste Zweifel an der Historizität dieser Person als Mutter Šābuhrs II. Der *Histoire Nestorienne* zufolge soll Īphrā-Hōrmīzd, deren Vater jüdischer Herkunft war, von dem Metropolit und Märtyrer Mār'ā Šem'ōn bar Šabbā'ē von Seleukeia-Ktēsiphōn im christlichen Glauben unterwiesen und getauft worden sein. Der Talmūd beschreibt Īphrā-Hōrmīzd als Wohltäterin und Fürsprecherin der Juden im Reich. J. Neusner dagegen hält die talmudischen Berichte über Īphrā-Hōrmīzd's Wirken und ihre Kontakte zu den Rabbinern für nicht historisch<sup>106</sup>.

Mirḥwānd<sup>107</sup> ist der einzige Chronist, der ausführlich über das Schicksal der namentlich nicht bekannten Prinzessin, der Tochter des Königs von Kabul, am Hofe Hormezds II. berichtet. Diese scheidet jedoch als Mutter Šābuhrs II. aus, da sie nicht bereit war, mit Hormezd II. die Ehe zu vollziehen. Wegen ihrer Weigerung wurde sie zum Tode verurteilt. Zu Recht bezeichnet R. Göbl die Begegnung Hormezds II. mit der Kušānprinzessin als „märchenhaft in der Art der Erzählungen aus Tausendundeiner Nacht“<sup>108</sup>. Bedauerlicherweise fehlen Primärquellen, die weitere Erkenntnisse zur Existenz der offiziellen Königin der Königinnen Hormezds II. bringen könnten.

Im Gegensatz zu den oben erwähnten Quellen erweitern lateinische, griechische, syrische und armenische Chronisten unsere Kenntnis von weiteren Nachkommen Hormezds II. Insgesamt haben wir Kenntnis von acht Söhnen und einer Tochter: Ādur Narseh, Hormisdas, ein Anonymus, Šābuhr [II.], Ναρθης, Bruder oder Sohn Šābuhrs II., Ardašīr [II.], wohl Bruder Šābuhrs II. [bei Moses Khorenats'i wird Ardašīr II. dagegen als Sohn Šābuhrs II. gesehen<sup>109</sup>], Ādur Frāzgerd, Zāmāsp und Hormezdduxtag.

<sup>105</sup> *Histoire Nestorienne*, *Patrologia Orientalis* IV 297-298.

<sup>106</sup> Th. Nöldeke, *Tabari* (1879) 51 Anm. 3. – J. Neusner, *ibid.* (1969) 35-39.

<sup>107</sup> Mirḥwānd [Mirkhond, + 1498 n. Chr.], *Histoire des rois de Perse, de la dynastie des Sassanides* (1843) 303-305. – M. Azarnoush, Šāpūr II, Ardašīr II, and Šāpūr III: another Perspective (1986) 221. – R. Göbl, *Donum Burns* (1993) 55f. – N. Schindel, *SNS* III/1(2004) 239. – M. Alram, *Ohrmazd II. (302/3 – 309/10)*, in M. Alram/R. Gyselen, *SNS* II(2012) 355 Anm. 4.

<sup>108</sup> M. Azarnoush, *ibid.* (1986) 221. – R. Göbl, *ibid.* (1993) 55. – N. Schindel, *SNS* III/1(2004) 239.

<sup>109</sup> Moses Khorenats'i, *History of the Armenians* (2006) III 50 = S. 309 Anm. 349: "Moses makes Artashir the successor of the Shapuh (III 51) who reigned for seventy years

Von diesen acht Söhnen bestiegen jedoch nur drei den Thron des Sāsānidenreiches: Ādur Narseh [?] (310), ferner der oben schon erwähnte Šābuhr [II.] und sein Bruder (?) Ardašīr [II.] (379-383).

Zunächst aber gilt es, die Überlieferung der Thronstreitigkeiten bei den byzantinischen Chronisten, bei Zonaras, beim salmasischen Johannes und bei Zosimos vorzustellen. Im Mittelpunkt der Streitigkeiten stehen neben Šābuhr II. (hier noch ein Kleinkind) die Prinzen Ādur Narseh, Hormisdas, Sapoires und ein namenlos gebliebener Prinz. Fest steht aber, dass die durch Primärquellen bezeugte Thronfolge den beiden ersten Chronisten nicht bekannt gewesen sein kann, da sie Hormezd II. übergehen und Šābuhr II. und die oben genannten Nachkommen zu Söhnen König Narsehs erklären (Zonaras XIII 5,26. – Salmasischer Johannes, Frgm. 266). Zur Genealogie und *vita* der Prinzen stehen bedauerlicherweise weder Primär- noch Tertiärquellen zur Verfügung. Außerdem können wir nicht auf Ammianus Marcellinus zurückgreifen, dessen Überlieferung für diese Zeitspanne nicht erhalten ist, noch finden sich bei Agathias, der durch einen Mittelsmann nach eigenem Bekunden Zugang zu den persischen Königsannalen hatte, Hinweise über die genannten Persönlichkeiten. Von daher kann auch die Historizität des Ādur Narseh als Großkönig letztendlich nicht bewiesen werden.

Zunächst ist der ausführliche Bericht des Zonaras, der von Šābuhr [II.], Sohn des Narseh [!], als dem derzeitigen Herrscher spricht<sup>110</sup>, zu prüfen. Zonaras' Bemerkung, dass Šābuhr von einer nicht standesgemäßen Mutter abstamme, dürfte aufschlussreich sein. Im Folgenden erwähnt Zonaras drei Halbbrüder Šābuhrs [II.], die aus einer Ehe des Narseh [!] mit der

(Shapuh II, 309-379). But this Artashir was Shapuh III's brother and reigned from 379 to 383 (cf. III 51), not in the time of Arcadius (395-408). The Shapuh of this chapter must be Shapuh III, (383-388)".

<sup>110</sup> Zonaras XIII 5, 17: Ὁ Κωνσταντῖος δὲ περὶ τὴν ἐφ' ἂν διατρίβων τοῖς Πέρσαις ἐμάχετο, Σαπώρου τοῦ ἔθνους, ὡς εἴρηται, βασιλεύοντος. ὃς Ναρσῆ μὲν ἦν υἱός, οὐ μέντοι ἐξ ἐπισήμου γυναικός.

Zonaras XIII 5,18-20: ἐκ γὰρ τῆς πρωτευούσης τῶν αὐτοῦ γαμετῶν τρεῖς ἐγένοντο τῷ Ναρσῇ παῖδες, Ἀδαρνάρσης καὶ Ὀρμίσδας καὶ τρίτος ἕτερος. τελευτήσαντος δὲ Ναρσοῦ ὁ πρεσβύτερος τῶν τριῶν τούτων Ἀδαρνάρσης τῆς ἀρχῆς διάδοχος γέγονεν. ὥμος δὲ λίαν τυγχάνων καὶ ἀπηνῆς κἀντεῦθεν μισούμενος ὑπὸ τῶν Περσῶν, τῆς βασιλείας ἐκπέπτωκεν.

Zonaras XIII 5,25-26: Τοῦτου τοίνυν οὕτω τῆς βασιλείας ἐκπεπτωκότος, Σαπώρης εἰς τὴν ἀρχὴν ἀντεισῆκτο. καὶ ὃς εὐθὺς τὸν μὲν ἕτερον τῶν ἀδελφῶν ἐξετύφλωσε, τὸν Ὀρμίσδαν δὲ δεσμήσας ἐμφοροῦρον εἶχεν.

vornehmsten (πρωτευούσης) seiner Frauen<sup>111</sup> hervorgegangen sein sollen: Ἀδαρνάρσης, Hormisdas und ein dritter namenloser Bruder. Zonaras zufolge war Ἀδαρνάρσης<sup>112</sup> der älteste der drei Brüder und nach dem Tode des Narseh [!] der Erbe des Sāsānidenreiches. Man muss annehmen, dass Ἀδαρνάρσης, der nur kurze Zeit regierte, wegen seines grausamen Regierungsstils den Unmut und den Hass der Adelspartei hervorrief. Dieses Verhalten führte zu seiner frühzeitigen Absetzung: Auf die Frage seines Vaters, ob ihm das für ihn aus babylonischen Fellen hergestellte Zelt gefalle, antwortet Ἀδαρνάρσης, dass er — nach seiner Thronerhebung — sich ein schöneres Zelt aus menschlichen Häuten herstellen werde<sup>113</sup>. Wegen seiner kurzen Regierungszeit (310) wurde er nach der Meinung A. von Gutschmids<sup>114</sup> wohl nicht in die offiziellen Königslisten aufgenommen. Über Ādur Narsehs Ende, vielleicht wurde er umgebracht, liegen keine Nachrichten vor.

Kurze Zeit danach, so Zonaras, erfolgte die Proklamation Šābuhrs [II.] (309/10-379) zum König des Sāsānidenreiches. Dieser entwickelte sich zu einer herausragenden Führungspersönlichkeit, zu einem der fähigsten und berühmtesten Sāsānidenherrscher während der fast viereinhalb Jahrhunderte währenden Geschichte des Reiches. Offensichtlich hatte die Adelspartei entweder aus Machtgier oder aus der Sorge, keinen geeigneten Prätendenten zu finden, es darauf angelegt, die Thronfolgeregelung nach ihrem Ermessen vorzunehmen. Dass der Adel, dem wohl die politische Weitsicht fehlte, einen Säugling zum Thronfolger einsetzte, dürfte Ausdruck seines großen Machtstrebens gewesen sein. Es bleibt im Ungewissen, ob das Sāsānidenreich in der Lage gewesen wäre, einen römischen Angriffskrieg zum damaligen Zeitpunkt siegreich abzuwehren.

<sup>111</sup> Zonaras XIII 5,18: πρωτευούσης dürfte hier wohl eher den protokollarischen Rang von Narsehs [!] Gattin betreffen als deren Status als erste offizielle Frau des Königs. Dazu s. die Übers. dieser Stelle bei Th. M. Banchich and E. N. Lane (2009) 159: “For from the foremost of his wives three sons were born to Narses...”.

<sup>112</sup> Salmasischer Johannes (2005) S. 450, Nr. 266 [Exc. Salm. II 75]. - Zonaras XIII 5,17-34. - Th. Nöldeke, Tabari (1879) 51 Anm. 3; 417. - F. Justi, Iranisches Namenbuch (1895) 3, Nr. 1 s. v. Ādharnarseh. - A. Tafazzolī, Ādur Narseh, in EncIr I,5(1983) 477. - W. Felix, Antike literarische Quellen zur Außenpolitik des Sāsānidenstaates 1(1985) 128-129. - M. Azarnoush, Šāpūr II, Ardašīr II, and Šāpūr III: another Perspective (1986) 219-247; hier 221.

<sup>113</sup> Zonaras XIII 5,26. - Salmasischer Johannes (2005) S. 450, Nr. 266 [Exc. Salm. II 75]. - Zosimos II 27,1-2.

<sup>114</sup> Th. Nöldeke, ibid. (1879) 51 Anm. 3 bezieht sich auf eine Aussage A. von Gutschmids.

Die Verlagerung der Herrschaftsgewalt vom König auf ein Mitglied der Adelspartei etwa in der Funktion eines Vizekönigs über einen Zeitraum von ca. mindestens 15 Jahren bis zur Regierungsfähigkeit Šābuhrs II., lässt auf eine starke Schwächung des Königtums schließen.

Auch nach der Thronerhebung Šābuhrs II. setzte sich der Streit um die Nachfolge zwischen der Königsfamilie, verschiedenen Adelsfraktionen und einem Teil des Adels und vermutlich auch der zarathustrischen Geistlichkeit fort. Der Stellvertreter des noch unmündigen Šābuhr II. — so muß man nach Zonaras' Bericht folgern — ließ den namenlos gebliebenen Prinzen blenden. Dadurch war dieser von einer eventuellen Nachfolge ausgeschlossen, da die Unversehrtheit des Königs nach sāsānidischem Recht unabdingbare Voraussetzung für das Amt des Großkönigs war<sup>115</sup>.

*Hormisdas*<sup>116</sup>, den dritten der drei Thronanwärter, ließ die stellvertretende Regierung Šābuhrs II. gefesselt unter Bewachung stellen (τὸν Ὅρμισδαν δὲ δεσμήσας ἔμφορον εἶχεν)<sup>117</sup>, um ihn ebenfalls von der Thronfolge fern zu halten. Desungeachtet gelang es ihm als einzigem der drei Brüder, den drohenden Gefahren im Thronfolgestreit durch seine Flucht ins Römische Reich aus dem Wege zu gehen. Obwohl der Bericht dieser Flucht an Erzählungen aus *Tausendundeiner Nacht* erinnert, muss ihm ein wahrer Kern zugrunde liegen, da außer Zonaras sowohl der salmasische Johannes, Zosimos als auch Ammianus Marcellinus<sup>118</sup> *Hormisdas*'

<sup>115</sup> H. Börm, Prokop und die Perser (2007) 112.

<sup>116</sup> Zur Unterscheidung von seinem Vater Hormezd II. soll sein Sohn, der in den griechisch-sprachigen Quellen *Hormisdas* genannt wird, auch im Folgenden diesen Namen tragen. — O. Seeck, *Hormisdas*, 3. In: RE 8,2(1913) 2410. — PLRE I *Hormisdas* 2 (1971) 443. — R. von Haehling, Die Religionszugehörigkeit der hohen Amtsträger des Römischen Reiches seit Constantins I. Alleinherrschaft bis zum Ende der Theodosianischen Dynastie (1978) 251f. — K. Mosig-Walburg, Die Flucht des persischen Prinzen Hormizd und sein Exil im Römischen Reich, in IrAnt 35(2000) 69-109. — S. Cosentino, Iranian Contingents in Byzantine Army (2004) 245-261; hier 250f. — M. Heil, Perser im spätrömischen Dienst (2006) 143-179; hier 143-144; 143 Anm. 3; 168.

<sup>117</sup> Zonaras XIII 5,25,3-4.

<sup>118</sup> Ammianus Marcellinus XVI 10,16: cui prope astans regalis Hormisdas, cuius e Perside discessum supra monstravimus. — An weiteren Stellen berichtet Ammianus Marcellinus über *Hormisdas*: XXIV 1.2: cornu uero laeuum cum equitum copiis Arintheo tradidit et *Hormisdas*...; XXIV 1.8: qui ad colloquium petito *Hormisdas* promissis eius et iuramentis illecti multa sibi de lenitudine Romana spondebant. — XXIV 2,4: prope extremum noctis, quae secundum diem secuta est, Surena, post regem apud Persas promeritae dignitatis, et Malechus Podosacis nomine, phylarchus Saracenorum Assanitarum, famosi nominis latro, omni saeuitia per nostros limites diu grassatus, structis *Hormisdas* insidiis, quem ad speculandum exiturum, incertum unde, praesenserant. — XXIV 2,11: et

Flucht ins Römische Reich bestätigen. Von Zonaras wissen wir, dass Šābuhr II. über Hormisdas' Flucht erleichtert gewesen sei, da ihm von nun an kein Kontrahent für die Thronfolge im Wege gestanden habe. Des Weiteren versuchte Šābuhr II. auch nicht, den Flüchtigen zurückzuholen, sondern sandte sogar seine Frau zu ihm (Zonaras XIII 5,31).

Außerdem äußerte sich Zonaras zu Hormisdas' militärischen Fähigkeiten: er sei ein ausgezeichneter Speerwerfer gewesen, dem Constantius im Krieg gegen die Perser eine große Abteilung der römischen Kavallerie anvertraut hatte. Hormisdas wäre sogar im Gefolge Constantius II.<sup>119</sup> nach Rom (Amm. Marcellinus XVI 10,16) gereist. Dass Hormisdas aber als ehemaliges Mitglied der sāsānidischen Königsfamilie nach seiner Flucht zu einem späteren Zeitpunkt zum „Kriegsrat“<sup>120</sup> Kaiser Julians aufgestiegen sei, dürfte für Aufsehen gesorgt haben. Wenig realistisch ist aber Libanios' Hinweis, dass Kaiser Julian erwogen habe, Hormisdas nach einem siegreichen Feldzug gegen die Perser zum šāhān šāh des Sāsānidenreiches zu machen<sup>121</sup>. Zu Recht führt B. Bleckmann<sup>122</sup> aus, dass Hormisdas' Flucht „nicht zur Verstimmung zwischen den beiden Großmächten geführt“ habe. Diese Feststellung ergibt sich aus einer Nachricht bei Eusebius in der Vita Constantini (IV 8), aus der hervorgeht, dass nach dem Ende des Licinius auf Initiative Šābuhrs II. ein Freundschaftsvertrag mit Kaiser Konstantin geschlossen wurde. Ungeachtet dieser Nachricht lässt sich ein innerer Zusammenhang zwischen der Flucht des Hormisdas und dem Vertragsabschluss mit Šābuhr II. in den Quellen nicht nachweisen<sup>123</sup>.

Nicht unerwähnt bleiben soll eine Nachricht über Hormisdas' angebliche Konversion zum Christentum. R. von Haehling zufolge ist dieser

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aliquotiens Hormisdas ut indigenae et regalis colloquia petentes obnixae propinquantem probris atque conuiciis ut male fidum incessebant et desertorem. Haec lenta cauillatione die maxima parte exempta... - XXIV 2,20. – XXIV 5,4.

<sup>119</sup> D. Kienast, Römische Kaisertabelle (32004) 354: „28. April 357: adventus Constantius' II. in Rom“.

<sup>120</sup> Zonaras XIII 13,7: τούτοις φρενοβλαβῶς ὁ ἀλιτήριος ἐκεῖνος πεισθεῖς, καὶ ταῦτα πολλῶν λεγόντων αὐτῷ καὶ αὐτοῦ τοῦ Ὁρμίσδου δόλον εἶναι τὸ πρᾶγμα, πῦρ ἐνέβαλε... — Zur Quellenlage s. auch B. Bleckmann, Die Reichskrise des III. Jahrhunderts in der spätantiken und byzantinischen Geschichtsschreibung (1992) 333-335; hier 335 Anm. 37.

<sup>121</sup> Libanios, Epistulae 1402,3: ἐλπίς τε ἤξειν τὸν βασιλέα τὸν μὲν νῦν ἄρχοντα ἄγοντα, παραδόντα δὲ τῷ φεύγοντι τὴν ἀρχήν. - B. Bleckmann, ibid. (1992) 335 Anm. 38.

<sup>122</sup> B. Bleckmann, ibid. (1992) 335 mit weiteren Literaturangaben.

<sup>123</sup> K. Mosig-Walburg, ibid. (2000) 94-95.



Bericht aus der „nicht zuverlässig verbürgten Überlieferung der Passio des Bonosus und Maximilianus“<sup>124</sup> entnommen. Obwohl feststehen dürfte, dass Hormisdas sich zwangsläufig mit dem Christentum auseinandergesetzt hat, so scheint mir eine Konversion zum Christentum eher unwahrscheinlich, da auch andere Quellen diese Tatsache nicht bestätigen können. Die Überlieferung zeichnet sich m. E. durch eine hagiographische Berichterstattung aus.

Eine vergleichsweise verkürzte und verderbte Überlieferung der Ereignisse nach dem Tode Hormezds II. dürfte beim *salmasischen Johannes*<sup>125</sup> vorliegen. Seine Überlieferung der familiären Verhältnisse Ādur Narsehs unterscheidet sich von der des Zonaras in entscheidenden Punkten. Danach hatte Ādur Narseh zwei Brüder; den einen, hier kein anonym gebliebener Bruder, sondern Šābuhr genannt, ließ er nach seiner Thronerhebung blenden, den anderen, mit Namen Hormisdas, verhaften und unter scharfe Bewachung stellen (τὸν δ' ἕτερον Ὁρμίσδην εἶχεν ἐν φυλαχῇ). Ob dieser Šābuhr mit dem namenlos gebliebenen Bruder Ādur Narsehs aus dem Bericht des Zonaras identisch ist, muss offen bleiben. Dass die Überlieferung des salmasischen Johannes aber Ādur Narsehs Halbbruder Šābuhr II. schweigend übergeht und dadurch den Ablauf der Ereignisse verfälscht, lässt auf mangelnde Qualität dieser Quelle schließen. Während im Bericht des Zonaras Šābuhr II., oder in diesem speziellen Falle die für ihn agierende Regierung, Herr des Verfahrens im Thronfolgestreit nach dem Tode Hormezds II. ist, übernimmt es beim salmasischen Johannes Ādur Narseh selbst an Stelle Šābuhrs II., die Thronanwärter auszuschalten.

Ebenso wie Zonaras erwähnt auch der salmasische Johannes Ādur Narsehs Grausamkeit, die sich in der bekannten Erzählung vom Zelt aus menschlichen Häuten widerspiegelt. Dieser Charakterzug zeigte sich auch ein weiteres Mal, als er begann, zwei Kontrahenten, die ihm den Thron hätten streitig machen könnten, auf gewaltsame Weise auszuschalten. Ob Ādur Narseh tatsächlich wegen seines grausamen Vorgehens vom Adel abgesetzt wurde, lässt der Chronist offen. Im Anschluss daran folgt Hormisdas' abenteuerliche Flucht ins Römische Reich, hier aber zu Licinius,

<sup>124</sup> R. von Haehling, *ibid.* (1978) 252: Sed tum Hormisda comes, qui credidit, et ipse veniens ad carcerem sua praesentia iussit claustra patefieri. Et cum aperuissent carcerem, et universos salvos vidisset et hilares, et Deo et Christo gratias agentes, ait ad illos Hormisda Comes: Rogate Dominum pro me peccatore, ut salvus sim.

<sup>125</sup> Salmasischer Johannes, ed. U. Roberto (2005) S. 450, Nr. 266 [Exc. Salm. II 75].

der ihn mit Ehrenbezeugungen empfing. - Auch in diesem Bericht rühmt der Chronist Hormisdas' Geschicklichkeit, den Speer im Kampf einzusetzen. Es habe sogar eine Statue existiert, die ihn als ausgezeichneten Speerwerfer darstellte.

Auch *Zosimos*<sup>126</sup> berichtet von Hormisdas' Flucht ins Römische Reich während der Auseinandersetzungen zwischen den Kaisern Konstantin und Licinius<sup>127</sup>. Zunächst geht der Chronist an zwei Stellen seines Berichtes auf Hormisdas' Herkunft ein: er wird als Perser aus königlichem Geschlecht, später sogar präziser als Sohn des Königs vorgestellt<sup>128</sup>, dessen Name Zosimos jedoch unerwähnt lässt. Der Beweggrund für Hormisdas' Flucht geht auf eine Episode während der Geburtstagsfeier des Königs zurück: Danach — so berichtet Zosimos — sei Hormisdas bei seiner Rückkehr von der Jagd von den anwesenden Gästen seines Vaters nicht mit dem ihm zustehenden Respekt begrüßt worden. Aus Verärgerung über seine Missachtung habe Hormisdas gedroht, ihnen das Schicksal des Marsyas zuteil werden zu lassen<sup>129</sup>. Nach dem Tode seines Vaters erinnerten sich die adligen Gäste an diese Drohung und wählten einen jüngeren Bruder zum Regenten, ungeachtet des bestehenden Gesetzes, dem Älteren den ihm gebührenden Vorrang zu geben. Aus Furcht vor seiner Rache fesselten sie den Prinzen Hormisdas und hielten ihn gefangen auf einem Hügel außerhalb der Stadt. Auf Initiative und durch Mithilfe seiner Frau gelang Hormisdas die Flucht. Im Gegensatz zu den beiden vorangehenden Chronisten lässt Zosimos dagegen Hormisdas' Flucht in zwei Etappen erfolgen (II 27,4), zunächst habe er sich zum König von Armenien, dann aber zu Konstantin begeben<sup>130</sup>. Da Hormisdas vermutlich eine so lange Haft nicht hätte überstehen können, stellt B. Bleckmann zu Recht fest, dass Zosimos' zeitliche Ansetzung unrealistisch sei. Kaiser Konstantin empfing den persischen Prinzen ehrenvoll und bezeugte ihm Respekt.

<sup>126</sup> Zosimos II 27,1-4; III 13,3-4.

<sup>127</sup> B. Bleckmann, *ibid.* (1992) 334 und Anm. 36.

<sup>128</sup> Zosimos II 27,1: Ἐν τούτῳ τῷ χρόνῳ πρὸς βασιλέα Κωνσταντῖνον ἠτομόλησε Πέρσης ἀνὴρ, Ὁρμίσδης ὄνομα, τοῦ βασιλείου γένους... - III 13,4: Περὶ δὲ Ὁρμίσδου καὶ πρότερον εἴρηται, ὅτι Πέρσης τε ἦν καὶ βασιλέως υἱός.

<sup>129</sup> Suda = Svidae Lexicon, ed. A. Adler III (1933[1967]) 331,11-20. – Übers. in *The History of Zonaras* (2009) 212-213.

<sup>130</sup> E. Kettenhofen, *Tirdād und die Inschrift von Paikuli* (1995) 126.

Zwei weitere Söhne Hormezds II. mit Namen *Ādurfrāzgird*<sup>131</sup> [ʾadrprz-grd] und *Zāmāsp*<sup>132</sup> [nach G. Hoffmann: zmšp oder zmyp] sind durch die von G. Hoffmann edierten „Auszüge aus syrischen Akten persischer Märtyrer“<sup>133</sup> bekannt geworden. Ihre Existenz ist aber durch andere Quellen nicht abgesichert. Wegen des hagiographischen Charakters der Märtyrerakten kann man die Erzählung nur unter Vorbehalt betrachten, obwohl sich ihre Ereignisse vor dem Hintergrund der Christenverfolgungen Šābuhrs II. abspielen. Aus dem Bericht ist nicht zu entnehmen, ob beide Brüder zur engeren oder erweiterten Königsfamilie gehörten, ob sie Brüder oder Halbbrüder Šābuhrs II. waren und aus einer Ehe Hormezds II. mit einer der Frauen seines Ḥarīms stammten. Das Wirken der beiden Brüder fällt in die sechziger Jahre des 4. Jahrhunderts nach dem Friedensvertrag Šābuhrs II. (363 n. Chr.) mit Kaiser Iovian. Den syrischen Märtyrerakten zufolge ordnete Šābuhr das Gebiet von ʿArbāyē neu und vergab es zur Verwaltung an „Mitglieder seiner Familie und auch den leiblichen Brüdern Zāmāsp und Ādurfrāzgird“. Letzterer erhielt einen Teil dieses Gebietes von Nisibis bis zum Flusse SRJA, Zāmāsp aber vom Flusse SRJA bis zum Tigris. Im Rahmen der Christenverfolgungen Šābuhrs II. versuchte auch Zāmāsp, viele Christen zum zarathustrischen Glauben zu bekehren. Sein Sohn Pērōz Gušnasp (pyrgwš), der mit Taufnamen „Mār Sābʿā“ hieß und zum christlichen Glauben übergetreten war, starb als Märtyrer. - Über Ādurfrāzgird liegen keine weiteren Nachrichten vor.

Die einzige bekannte Tochter Hormezds II. und Schwester Šābuhrs II. trägt den Namen *Ormizduxt*. Aus der knappen Erwähnung bei drei armenischen Historikern, Ps. Pʿawstos Buzand, Moses Khorenatsʿi und Thomas Artsruni<sup>134</sup>, ist zu entnehmen, dass Ormizduxt von ihrem Vater an einen armenischen Prinzen aus dem Adelsgeschlecht der Mamikonier verheiratet worden sein soll. Nach der Überlieferung des Ps. Pʿawstos Buzand sei Ormizduxt die Gattin des Vahan Mamikonean gewesen, der sich zusam-

<sup>131</sup> F. Justi, *Iranisches Namenbuch* (1895) 3 s. v. Ādharafrōzgurd, Bruder Sapor's II. - C. J. Brunner, *Ādurfrāzgird*, in *EncIr* I,5 (1983) 478.

<sup>132</sup> F. Justi, *ibid.* (1895) 109 s. v. Jāmāspa Nr. 5.

<sup>133</sup> *Auszüge aus syrischen Akten persischer Märtyrer* (1880) 23-27.

<sup>134</sup> F. Justi, *ibid.* (1895) 10 s. v. Ahura-mazdāh: Zusammensetzungen: 4) Ormizduxt. - Ps. Pʿawstos Buzand, ed. by N. G. Garsoïan (1989) IV 50 = S. 167f., Kommentar S. 300 = IV 50 Anm. 11. Prosopography s. v. Ormizduxt S. 397. - Moses Khorenatsʿi, ed. by R. W. Thomson (2006) III 36 = S. 290-291; III 50 = S. 309-310. - Thomas Artsruni [9.-10. Jh.], *History of the House of Artsrunikʿ*. Transl. and Commentary by R. W. Thomson (1985) 126-127 [Book I, Chapter 10 (62)].

men mit seinem Neffen Meružan gegen König Aršak II. erhoben und sich auf die Seite Šābuhrs II. gestellt hätte. Um dem König zu gefallen, hätte er dem christlichen Glauben abgeschworen und sich zum Zarathustrismus bekannt. Nachdem Vahan das Vertrauen des persischen Königs erlangt hatte, habe er ihm seine Schwester zur Frau gegeben. Außerdem habe ihn Šābuhr II. mit Insignien für höchste adlige Würdenträger ausgezeichnet, die früher seine Ahnen besessen hätten. Nach dem Tode des Königs Aršak von Armenien soll Vahan zusammen mit seiner Frau Ormizduxt von ihrem Sohn Samuēl ermordet worden sein, da er sich für die Verbreitung des Zarathustrismus in Armenien eingesetzt hatte. Moses Khorenats'i und der von ihm abhängige Thomas Artsruni weichen insofern von der Überlieferung des Ps. P'awstos Buzand ab, indem sie Meružan und nicht Vahan als Gemahl der Prinzessin Ormizduxt bezeichnen. Ungeachtet dieser drei Quellen kann die Historizität dieser Persönlichkeit durch andere Quellen nicht bestätigt werden. -

Wider Erwarten stellte sich die Thronfolge auch nach der siebzigjährigen Regierungszeit Šābuhrs II. (379) als schwierig heraus. Nach einer überwiegenden Zahl der arabo-persischen Quellen habe Šābuhr II. nicht seinen Sohn, den späteren Šābuhr III., sondern seinen Bruder Ardašīr [II.]<sup>135</sup> (379/80-383) zu seinem direkten Nachfolger bestimmt.

Allein Ta'alibī (S. 532) berichtet, dass Ardašīr einen Monat nach Šābuhrs II. Geburt zur Welt gekommen sei und aus einer Verbindung seines Vaters Hormezd mit einer Frau seines Ḥarīms stamme. Ungeachtet der Vielzahl der Quellen bleibt das verwandtschaftliche Verhältnis zwischen Šābuhr II. und Ardašīr II. letztendlich wegen fehlender Primärquellen im Ungewissen. Dennoch darf m. E. nicht übersehen werden, dass

<sup>135</sup> F. Justi, *Iranisches Namenbuch* (1895) 35 s. v. Artaxšaṯrā Nr. 17) Ardešīr II. – Agathias IV 26,1. – A. Cameron (1969/1970) S. 147. – St. Ev. Assemani, *Acta Sanctorum Martyrum* I(1748) 99, 105. – Abū 'l-Fidā' 84,22f. – Agapius von Manbidj 591. – aṭ-Ṭabarī 846,4-10. – Th. Nöldeke, *Tabarī* 69-70. – C. E. Bosworth, *Ṭabarī* 67-68. – Bal'amī II 102. – al-Mas'ūdī, *Murūğ ad-dahab* 202,5-8 = § 611; *Kitāb at-tanbīh* 100,21-22. – Ibn Qutaiba 659,5-8. – al-Ya'qūbī I 183,4-5. – Ta'alibī 532. – Ibn al-Aṭīr I 397. – Firdausī V 483. – Eutychius I 134,14-15; 16-17: [hier falsche Chronologie: zunächst herrschte Šābuhrs II. Sohn (!) Ardašīr, danach Šābuhr, Bruder Šābuhrs II. (lat. Übers. *Patrologia Graeca* 111(1863) 1013: 472. – Moses Khorenats'i III 50 [hier Ardašīr Sohn (!) Šābuhrs II.: But Shapuh, at the instigation and warning of our princes, immediately sent his own son Artashir with a large army to Armenia. – M. Azarnoush, *Šāpūr II, Ardašīr II, and Šāpūr III: another Perspective* (1986) 219-247; hier 225-228. – N. Schindel, *Ardašīr II.*, in id., *SNS III/1*(2004) 260-263 [hier: historischer Abriss].

die Zeitnahe Ereignisgeschichte des byzantinischen Chronisten Agathias, der sich für die bekannte Thronfolgeregelung ausspricht, von den Autoren der tertiären Überlieferung in diesem Punkte bestätigt wird. Wie kontrovers die wissenschaftliche Diskussion über Ardašīrs Abstammung geführt wurde, hat N. Schindel in seiner Einleitung zur Münzkunde dieses Großkönigs dargelegt<sup>136</sup>. Zum Zeitpunkt seiner Krönung muss Ardašīr als unwesentlich älterer Bruder, wenn wir ihn als Sohn Hormezds II. anerkennen, ca. 69/70 Jahre alt gewesen sein. Über Ardašīrs vierjährige Regierungszeit ist nur wenig bekannt. Vor dieser Zeit sei er nach Aussage der *Acta Sanctorum Martyrum*<sup>137</sup> in den Jahren 344 und noch bis 376 König der Adiabene gewesen<sup>138</sup>. Hier habe er sich vor allem durch die Verfolgung der Christen hervorgetan. Widersprüchlich aber bleibt seine Beurteilung in den Quellen: Einerseits habe er den Beinamen der „Gute“ getragen, andererseits habe seine Grausamkeit gegenüber den Großen des Reiches zu seiner Absetzung<sup>139</sup> geführt.

Noch größere Schwierigkeiten bereitet die Identifikation eines *Prinzen* *Ναρσης*. Sein Auftreten<sup>140</sup> fällt in die Zeit Constantins I. und seines Sohnes Constantius II. vor dem Hintergrund der römisch-sāsānidischen Kriege.

<sup>136</sup> N. Schindel, *ibid.* SNS III/1(2004) 260-263.

<sup>137</sup> St. Ev. Assemani, *Acta Sanctorum Martyrum* I(1748) 99; 105. – Wegen der schwierigen Zugänglichkeit dieser Quelle möchte ich die lateinische Übersetzung des Textes aus dem Aufsatz von M. Azarnoush [*ibid.* (1986) 228, Anm. 63] übernehmen: Assemani, *Acta*, p. 96: „Verum praeterquamquod in genuinis Actis, jussu Ardasciri, non vero Saporis Regis, Johannes gladio Caesus, et Sapores aerumnis ac pedore carceris confectus, Martyrii palmam obtinuisse dicuntur; ...“ and pp. 99-100: „Eundem finem sortiti sunt Johannes, Episcopus Oppidi Beth-Seleucia, qui in Castello Beth-Hascita, jussu Ardasciri Reguli, seu Praesidis Hadiabi, interfectus est. – Sapores, Oppidi cujusdam Beth-Seleuciae Episcopus, aerumnis, ac pedore carceris confectus, occubuit. Quod quum eidem Praesidie a custodibus carceris renunciatum fuisset, fraudem suspicatus, ut mortuo caput abscinderent, illudque ad se deferrent, imperavit. Quod illi continuo praestiterunt“. – *ibid.* p. 153: „Delatoris verba adripuit averse Rex, a Ardasciro, Hadiabi Regulo, gravissima oratione mandavit, ut confestim reos comprehendi curaret, atque de re acrem, ...“

<sup>138</sup> A. Sh. Shahbazi, Ardašīr II., in *EncIr* II,4(1986) 380-381.

<sup>139</sup> Firdausī V 483 = Kap. XXXI: Fälschlicherweise gibt Firdausī für Ardašīrs II. Regierungszeit 10 Jahre an. Er nennt ihn den Guten: „on lui donna le nom de Nikoukar [le bienfaisant], parce que personne n'a été inquiété par lui; il ne demanda à personne ni tribut, ni redevance, ni impôt...“ – Ṭabarī 846,8-10; C. E. Bosworth, Ṭabarī 67-68; *Histoire Nestorienne* 260.

<sup>140</sup> Namensansetzung: Festus XXVII: Narseus, ohne Verwandtschaftsgrad; Theophanes S. 20 = A.M. 5815: *Ναρσης*, Sohn des persischen Herrschers; Ps. P'awstos Buzand III 21; Übers. N.G. Garsoïan S. 97-100: Nerseh, king of Persia; s. dazu auch die Edition Venetik <sup>4</sup>1933, S. 65, Z. 29: Nerseh: diesen Hinweis verdanke ich Herrn Prof. E.

Fehlende Primärquellen und die dürftige Qualität der römisch-byzantinischen und armenischen Quellen, bei Festus, Theophanes, Ps. P'awstos Buzand und Moses Khorenats'i<sup>141</sup> erschweren eine eindeutige Identifizierung seiner Person. K. Mosig-Walburg<sup>142</sup>, die sich eingehend mit der höchst umstrittenen Person des Prinzen *Ναρσῆς* befasst hat, legt zunächst die aus der wissenschaftlichen Diskussion bekannten Identifikationsvorschläge vor. Dort wird *Ναρσῆς* teils als Sohn Hormezds II., d. h. als Bruder oder Halbbruder Šābuhrs II., oder teils als Angehöriger der sāsānidischen Königsfamilie gesehen, der als Befehlshaber eines persischen Heeres in Mesopotamien und/oder in Armenien eingefallen sei. Andere wiederum halten den Prinzen *Ναρσῆς* für einen Sohn Šābuhrs II., der in der Schlacht bei Singara sein Ende fand. Des weiteren soll ein *Ναρσῆς* (Sohn des Šābuhr) als Befehlshaber der sāsānidischen Armee in Armenien einmarschiert und mit dem Thronfolger identisch sein, der in der Schlacht von Singara gefallen ist. Nach einem weiteren Deutungsvorschlag soll es zwei Personen mit Namen *Ναρσῆς* gegeben haben, zum einen den Sohn Šābuhrs, der in der Schlacht von Singara getötet wurde, und einen anderen, der als Befehlshaber der persischen Armee in Mesopotamien einmarschierte<sup>143</sup>. Letztendlich kommt die Verfasserin aber zu dem Ergebnis, dass die bekannten Quellen eine eindeutige Identifizierung dieses *Ναρσῆς* nicht erlauben<sup>144</sup>.

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Kettenhofen. - Moses Khorenats'i III,10, Übers. R. W. Thomson (<sup>2</sup>2006) S. 259-260.: Bruder Šābuhrs II.

<sup>141</sup> F. Justi, Iranisches Namenbuch (1895) 221: \*Nariyaḫa Nr. 17: hier Sohn Šābuhrs II. - Festus XXVII,2. - Theophanes S. 20,21-26. - Moses Khorenats'i III 10, Übers. R. W. Thomson (<sup>2</sup>2006) 259-260. - PLRE, Narses 2, in I(1971) 616.

<sup>142</sup> K. Mosig-Walburg, Zu Spekulationen über den sasanidischen „Thronfolger Narsê“ und seine Rolle in den sasanidisch-römischen Auseinandersetzungen im zweiten Viertel des 4. Jahrhunderts n. Chr. (2000) 111-157; hier 111-112, Nr. 1-4. - M. Azarnoush, Šāpūr II, Ardašīr II, and Šāpūr III: another Perspective (1986) 219-247.

<sup>143</sup> K. Mosig-Walburg, *ibid.* (2000) 111-112: ich übernehme hier die Zusammenstellung der Diskussionspunkte 1-4 von S. 111-112.

<sup>144</sup> K. Mosig-Walburg, *ibid.* (2000) 150-152.



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